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Summary record of the 6th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 4 October 2018, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Shikongo (Vice-Chair) ..... (Namibia)

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In the absence of Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan), Ms. Shikongo (Namibia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 109: Crime prevention and criminal justice (*continued*) (A/73/131, A/73/132, A/73/133, A/73/134 and A/73/136)

Agenda item 110: International drug control (*continued*) (A/73/135)

1. **Ms. Kipiani** (Georgia) said that the top priorities set out in her country's criminal justice reform strategy and action plan for the period 2017–2021 were to prevent crime, protect human rights, establish a fair and independent judiciary and ensure accountability, objectivity and efficiency in the criminal justice system. The judicial reform was aimed at providing stronger guarantees for non-interference with judicial decisions and creating an impartial case allocation system that ensured that judges were selected based on clear criteria and fair and transparent procedures.

2. Georgia had established an interagency council on combating trafficking in human beings, which mobilized all major governmental and non-governmental actors to ensure well-coordinated, multifaceted and inclusive actions against trafficking. Of particular concern was the protection of street children, and initiatives taken by the council included the issuance of identification documents to ensure their access to State-run services. The effectiveness of the anti-trafficking national referral mechanism and the efforts made for the identification and resocialization of street children had been widely recognized.

3. The fight against drug abuse and drug-related crimes were among the key priorities in Georgia. The anti-drug policy was aimed at developing national measures to prevent crime, providing treatment and rehabilitation programmes and reducing drug supply and demand, with particular attention to raising awareness of the threats of drug consumption. In that context, a national drug monitoring centre, which introduced evidence-based scientific methodologies to collect and analyse information on the drug situation in Georgia, had been established in May 2018.

4. Georgia had enhanced its counterterrorism legislation by widening the scope of terrorism-related offences to include those activities set out in Security Council resolution 2178 (2014). The strengthening of the legal framework had resulted in effective enforcement measures to prosecute perpetrators connected with international terrorism.

5. **Mr. Salarzai** (Afghanistan) said that the nexus between narcotics and terrorism was well documented in his country; the illicit drug trade continued to undermine its stability and economic development and facilitated other forms of transnational organized crime. The adverse impact of drugs, coupled with unemployment and poverty, had had a profound effect on society, to the extent that around 3.2 million Afghans were victims of the global epidemic of drug abuse.

6. The Government was committed to combating the drug problem with concrete policies. In 2017, it had conducted over 2,700 operations leading to over 3,000 arrests, including of foreign nationals, and the seizure of 300 tons of narcotics. It had also destroyed 50 drug processing labs and 12 storage facilities. Those actions had led to a net loss of $362 million for drug traffickers. Policy-related measures to curb the narcotics trade included enhancing security at airports and border crossing points, the bombardment of facilities involved in drug production and distribution and the creation of an emergency response unit.

7. Despite efforts to curb narcotics production and trade, a significant percentage of poppy cultivation and drug production took place in the insecure provinces of Afghanistan, and terrorist organizations were creating fertile ground for production and trafficking. Three key factors behind the need to enhance security in that area were the increase in the number of foreign fighters affiliated with transnational terrorist networks; Taliban involvement in the narcotics trade; and the distinction that some Member States had made between "good" and "bad" terrorists. Noting that promoting security and bringing peace and stability to the country was a priority, he called on the international community to provide its continued support to overcome the drug menace in the country.

8. **Mr. Alajmi** (Qatar) said that his country was working tirelessly to implement the Organized Crime Convention and uphold the Trafficking in Persons Protocol and looked to the Convention as a mechanism for strengthening criminal justice systems and the rule of law and facilitating the achievement of the goals set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

9. The Doha Declaration, adopted at the Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, had contributed greatly to the inclusion of crime prevention and criminal justice in the wider United Nations agenda. Qatar would continue to work with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on the follow-up to that Declaration and welcomed the adoption of the Doha Declaration Global Programme, which provided support for special

sports programmes to prevent crime among young people, as well as for projects related to the rehabilitation and social reintegration of prisoners, justice education, and judicial integrity.

10. Qatar had adopted a number of procedures to combat illicit drug use and, as part of its National Development Strategy 2018–2022, was implementing projects to raise awareness of the dangers posed by illicit drugs, provide treatment to and rehabilitate drug users, and provide training on effective counter-drug strategies.

11. It was also taking action to combat trafficking in persons. In 2017, Qatar had hosted the fifth International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) Global Conference on Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of Migrants and had helped convene the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Qatar called on Member States to uphold the commitments they had made at that meeting and redouble their efforts to implement the recommendations contained in its outcome document.

12. Qatar played an effective regional role in raising awareness of anti-corruption measures and had been ranked as one of the world's least corrupt countries in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index — an achievement that had been possible because of his Government's strenuous efforts to combat all forms of corruption. At the international level, Qatar had launched an annual award to honour individuals and institutions that had made special efforts in the fight against corruption. It was also preparing to host an international conference on cybersecurity, in support of efforts by the international community to combat cybercrime.

13. **Mr. Wong Keng Hoe** (Singapore) said that Singapore, given its position as a transport hub, was vulnerable to transnational crime, in particular cybercrime and the drugs trade. Cybercrime, which had been the primary focus of the twenty-seventh session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, was estimated to have cost $600 billion worldwide in 2017, up from $445 billion in 2014. As an open and connected economy with one of the highest mobile phone penetration rates in the world, Singapore was particularly vulnerable to cyberthreats. To counter such threats and protect essential services, it had implemented a national cybersecurity strategy, as well as a national cybercrime action plan to educate the public, strengthen legislation and enhance capacity to detect and deter cyberthreats.

14. At the regional level, as a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Singapore had organized cybercrime workshops with dialogue partners from China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. At the international level, it had hosted the sixth INTERPOL-Europol Cybercrime Conference on cyberthreat intelligence, methods to identify cybercriminals through their online behaviour and the role of digital forensics. Determined to continue to play an active role in facilitating cooperation and coordination in cybersecurity, Singapore planned to establish the ASEAN-Singapore Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence, with the aim of training computer emergency response teams, strengthening cyberrelated legislation and research capabilities and promoting information-sharing on cyberthreats across the region.

15. Drug abuse was another transnational challenge that needed to be addressed. The approach in Singapore had been based on harm prevention rather than harm reduction and the Government had thus adopted a comprehensive drug control strategy, characterized by preventive drugs education, vigorous enforcement, tough legislation and a strong emphasis on engagement and rehabilitation. The approach had contained the drug situation in Singapore to the extent that it had one of the lowest rates of drug abuse worldwide, with drug abusers comprising less than 0.1 per cent of the population. However, strong international cooperation was required to tackle existing and emerging transnational threats. Singapore would continue to work with other Member States to meet the goals set out in the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem.

16. **Ms. Inanc-Ornekol** (Turkey) said that the international community should act in close cooperation to address the threat of transnational organized crime, including human trafficking, which constituted a clear violation of human rights and had immense social and economic costs. Turkey, which hosted more refugees than any other country, was determined to prevent refugees from falling victim to human trafficking and forced labour. It had taken a number of steps in that regard, including establishing a coordination commission, revising the national action plan on human trafficking, setting up a multilingual helpline and creating victim support and voluntary return programmes.

17. Turkey was committed to combating terrorism in all its forms without distinction. It would continue to fight all terrorist organizations, including the Fethullah terrorist organization, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Qaida, the Kurdish Workers Party and the

Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat. The international community must act with equal determination against all terrorist organizations; a selective approach was unacceptable. In addition, States must ensure that terrorists were brought to justice. Effective implementation of the obligation to extradite or prosecute was crucial. Given the link between terrorism and organized crime, efforts must be made to tackle human, drug and arms trafficking and money-laundering.

18. The world drug problem must be approached comprehensively. Turkey contributed to bilateral and multilateral efforts to fight drug abuse and trafficking. Owing to its geographic location, Turkey was exposed to an extensive flow of illicit goods. Its counter-narcotics policy was based on three pillars: combating domestic distribution networks; dismantling international drug trafficking networks; and investigating the financing of terrorist groups — in particular the Kurdish Workers Party — through drug trafficking. The national strategy on drugs and the action plan, which covered the period 2018–2023, had been implemented under the coordination of the Ministry of Health.

19. **Archbishop Auza** (Observer for the Holy See) said that while technological progress had brought enormous benefits to the world, it had also led to new forms of terrorism and criminal activity. The Holy See was particularly concerned about the growth of cybercrimes such as hacking, computer forgery, the spread of fake news, the dissemination of child pornography and copyright infringement. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) had found in a study that girls accounted for the majority of victims of cyber child abuse and exploitation.

20. The Holy See was also concerned about the spread of drug abuse and trafficking. Reducing drug consumption was critical; legalizing drug use was not an acceptable way to combat addiction. The Holy See viewed the family unit as integral to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies. As the global drug crisis was fuelled by diffuse production and distribution centres and by sophisticated money-laundering schemes embedded in financial centres and banking operations, the Holy See therefore encouraged international cooperation at legislative and operational levels. It also supported preventive and therapeutic medical treatments that would help the victims of drug abuse to rediscover their dignity as human beings.

21. **Ms. Vadhanaphong** (Thailand) said that his country had joined the efforts of the international community to deliver long-term, inclusive and sustainable interventions to combat the global drug problem at the national and international levels. Thailand had reiterated its commitment and political will by co-hosting the Global Call to Action on the World Drug Problem, aimed at reducing drug demand, eliminating the supply of illicit drugs, expanding treatment and strengthening international cooperation. In an effort to crack down on drug trafficking, it had also partnered with UNODC to improve cross-border cooperation and intelligence-sharing. Under the Mekong Memorandum of Understanding on Drug Control, border liaison offices had been tasked with sharing real-time information on drug trafficking activities and transnational crime.

22. Alternative development was a critical component of a comprehensive drug control strategy. In July 2018, Thailand had co-hosted with Germany, Peru and UNODC an expert group meeting on alternative development, during which participants had reviewed best practices and lessons learned and discussed how alternative development could contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. During its sixty-sixth session, to be held in March 2019, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs would consider the report and recommendations adopted at that meeting.

23. With regard to drug demand reduction, Thailand had continued to implement a health-based drug policy under which a mechanism had been established to provide access to treatment for drug users, including addicts in prison. As set out in the *World Drug Report 2018*, a much higher proportion of women than men were in prison for drug-related offences. Consequently, Thailand had applied a gender perspective to crime prevention strategies and prison administration. It was a priority in prison management for female prisoners to be treated in accordance with the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders.

24. Given the link between drugs, corruption, illicit financial flows and organized crime, it was necessary to strengthen policies to prevent and detect the transfer of proceeds of crime. In that regard, Thailand had adopted an anti-corruption act in July 2018, containing new provisions that were in compliance with the requirements of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

25. **Ms. Belskaya** (Belarus) said that the creation of effective cooperation mechanisms enabled the comprehensive coordination of efforts to combat trafficking in persons. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons played an important role in that process. As traffickers were able

to carry out practically every step of their criminal activities using the Internet, combating trafficking in cyberspace was therefore of particular importance.

26. Belarus supported the international legal and institutional framework for combating drugs and efforts to adapt the three international anti-drug conventions to the new realities. It did not support calls to legalize drugs or to lift bans on illicit drug trafficking. The use of drugs by children and adolescents was unacceptable.

27. Belarus commended the efforts of UNODC to provide legal support to States in combating terrorism and welcomed the fact that, at the anti-terrorism conference to be held in Minsk in October 2018, UNODC would hold a seminar on that topic for representatives of law enforcement bodies.

28. **Mr. Wang** Zhaoxue (China) said that his country supported the international drug control system anchored on the three main drug control conventions, opposed the legalization of illicit drugs and stressed the need to regulate controlled substances in strict accordance with those conventions while ensuring their uses for medical and scientific purposes. It also supported the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Narcotics Control Board and the World Health Organization in performing their work in accordance with their respective mandates, as well as the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in its role in formulating international drug control policies and in steering the preparatory process of the high-level ministerial segment of its sixty-second session. The implementation of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action, the Joint Ministerial Statement of the 2014 high-level review by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Outcome Document of the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem should be the focus of the work of all stakeholders. China also supported the publication of the updated edition of the International Standards on Drug Use Prevention by UNODC and hoped that they would guide Member States in formulating preventive education strategies in line with their respective national conditions.

29. The global drug problem needed to be tackled through a comprehensive, integrated and balanced approach. In fighting the drug scourge, human rights should be safeguarded while giving due consideration to the need to ensure social order, public welfare and shared interests. However, no undue emphasis should be given to human rights issues at the cost of endeavours in other fields. Countries needed to strengthen international law enforcement and judicial cooperation in drug control and help developing countries in their capacity-building through funding assistance, technological cooperation and information-sharing to jointly respond to the challenge. The international community should pay attention to the inadequate supply of basic medicines in some countries and the abuse, overuse and illicit transfer of controlled substances in other countries. Each country was entitled to formulate drug control policies best suited to its national conditions in conformity with the three conventions. The question of the death penalty should not be associated with that of narcotic drugs.

30. Adopting a zero-tolerance approach to corruption, China had established the National Supervision Commission in 2018. Given the importance of international anti-corruption cooperation, China called on States parties to implement the United Nations Convention against Corruption and eliminate political and legal obstacles to cooperation in tracking fugitives and recovering assets transnationally so that corrupt officials and their illicit gains would have nowhere to hide. The parties should adhere to the principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, respect for sovereignty, and the intergovernmental nature of review mechanisms, so as to properly conduct the second cycle of the review and improve working efficiency.

31. Parties should apply the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime as a form of judicial support and a legal basis for cooperation in the areas of extradition and asset recovery. His delegation supported the establishment of an effective mechanism for reviewing the implementation of the Convention and was of the view that all parties should engage in the intergovernmental process and ensure a non-invasive and non-punitive character in the design of the mechanism, while drawing on experiences relating to a similar mechanism for the Convention against Corruption.

32. In the context of the recent increase in incidents of cybercrime and transnational telecommunications fraud and ransomware attacks, his delegation supported the work of the group of experts on cybercrime as well as the formulation of an international legal instrument on cybercrime.

33. **Mr. Thein** (Myanmar) said that in 2018, his country had adopted a new policy that aimed to reduce the supply of drugs by investigating drug-related offences, combating corruption and implementing development programmes. As part of that approach, over 1,000 farmers in Myanmar had switched from opium to coffee production and had recently signed a major contract with a French coffee company. The new

policy also aimed to curb demand for drugs by promoting a harm-reduction approach that focused on prevention. It also emphasized international cooperation, investment in research and analysis and compliance with human rights.

34. The trafficking of synthetic drugs such as methamphetamine in East and Southeast Asia had led to security risks and public health issues. The Government of Myanmar was particularly alarmed by reports of trafficking of large quantities of precursor chemicals in the region. To address that issue, Myanmar would host a regional conference in November on regional cooperation to stem the flow of precursors. Early warning systems could help monitor the phenomenon and foster a proactive approach. Countries such as Myanmar, with limited resources, required assistance in collecting and analysing information and in improving national capacity for tackling drug-related problems. UNODC therefore needed adequate resources so that it could support Member States in their efforts to counter transnational organized crime, corruption and terrorism and strengthen their criminal justice systems.

35. **Mr. Coulibaly** (Mali) said that illicit drug trafficking was a source of financing for transnational organized crime and terrorist groups around the world. Mali had adopted policies commensurate with the scope of the drug phenomenon, including a legal framework. It had pursued institutional measures such as the creation of agencies tasked with preventing, controlling and punishing drug trafficking and established agencies to address health, pharmaceutical and security matters. Cooperation among those bodies allowed the Government to seize more than 600 kg of cannabis, 1.5 kg of cocaine and 10 kg of heroin in 2017.

36. With respect to multilateral cooperation, the Government and UNODC had worked together since 2014 to offer training activities for staff at Malian judicial and law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, the UNODC Airport Communication Project (AIRCOP) had created a secure, real-time communication system between countries to better control illicit drug flows. Mali was convinced of the need for a unified response to such flows, and thus had ratified almost all relevant international legal instruments.

37. The cascading repercussions of the collapse of Libya in 2011 had led to an increase in terrorist acts and transnational organized crime in the Sahel region. The creation of the G5 Sahel had been a response to the need for regional cooperation in tackling such crimes and possessed a joint force mandated to combat terrorism and organized crime, including trafficking in migrants. However, a purely security-oriented response had its limits, particularly in the context of the Sahel, with its widespread unemployment that left youth vulnerable to negative influences.

38. **Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka) said that drug abuse adversely affected public health and safety around the world and hindered social and economic development. Despite efforts to prevent drug use among its citizens, Sri Lanka had continued to see slight but steady increases in narcotics consumption, particularly heroin. It had taken a comprehensive approach to the issue, focusing on treatment, rehabilitation and reducing supply and demand. Its National Dangerous Drugs Control Board worked to curb drug use by strengthening customs and law enforcement capabilities, developing a harmonized legislative approach to drug-related offences, and improving treatment and rehabilitation services. The Board also worked closely with the Police Narcotics Bureau to investigate major drug cases.

39. In 2005, the Government had developed a national policy to tackle the issue, which included enhanced measures to stem the production, smuggling, trafficking and use of illicit drugs. The policy also supported regional and international preventive initiatives and considered the links between drug use, poverty, crime and health. Sri Lanka had become a strategic hub for international drug smugglers in Asia, and the Government had responded to that development by tightening security procedures and regulations. The Government worked closely with the UNODC Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific on those issues. It also had partnered with six South Asian countries to establish a regional intelligence and coordination centre to facilitate information exchange and strengthen intergovernmental cooperation against crime.

40. **Mr. Cortorreal** (Dominican Republic) said that there were two main threats to global stability and security: drug trafficking and organized crime. His country had a well-known vulnerability to illicit trafficking in drugs, particularly because of its geographical location, which made it a natural country of transit between producer and consumer countries.

41. Local interventions were focused on prevention and containment campaigns that were particularly aimed at young people, supporting them through training and entrepreneurial opportunities. Measures had also been adopted to improve neighbourhoods affected by criminal activities, including by recovering public spaces for the most affected communities and reducing the risk of exclusion with a view to keeping the most vulnerable groups away from criminal networks. At the national level, a law against money laundering and

terrorist financing based on the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force of Latin America had recently been adopted. Such initiatives had enabled the country to tackle an endemic scourge that threatened the integrity of its economy and democracy.

42. Progress could be made by joining forces, sharing information and providing mutual support. Developing countries devoted billions of dollars every year to curbing drug trafficking, thus assisting in protecting more developed countries. However, any amount spent would be insufficient in the face of the abundant resources of organized criminal networks, which undoubtedly had a bearing on the social disintegration experienced by many countries. His delegation called on developed countries to combat poverty in a comprehensive manner by tackling organized crime and drug trafficking.

43. **Mr. Sahraoui** (Algeria) said that his country, which was engaged in a battle against illicit drug trafficking, reiterated its commitment to the full implementation of international drug-control instruments. However, the fight against drugs could not succeed without a holistic approach based on social and economic development and regional and international cooperation. Algeria therefore prioritized regional cooperation, particularly with its neighbours in the Sahel region, by sharing information, training personnel and providing them with multidimensional assistance, including equipment. Algeria had also participated in the creation of the African Police Cooperation Organization (AFRIPOL), a mechanism that could help ensure the efficacy of African drug control work by facilitating information exchange among African police institutions.

44. The international community must act to dry up the sources of terrorist funding, which included financial flows from drug trafficking. To that end, Algeria had recently organized a high-level meeting of the African Union on the fight against terrorist financing. It had also made significant efforts to combat human trafficking by disrupting traffickers' networks and by updating its legal frameworks. A 2016 presidential decree had provided an interministerial committee with funding and a mandate to prevent and combat trafficking in persons. The Algerian penal code also imposed heavy sanctions on the perpetrators of those crimes.

45. **Mr. Bin Momen** (Bangladesh) said that his country had recently strengthened its resolve to contain the drug problem through heightened alertness and a zero-tolerance policy which dealt severely with perpetrators of drug-related crimes. Addressing the drug problem remained difficult, nevertheless, because of the continuously changing nature of the drugs themselves and the ingenuity of smuggling tactics. Bangladesh was working to eradicate the use of Yaba tablets (a mixture of methamphetamine and caffeine) entering Bangladesh from Myanmar and other South-East Asian countries. Bangladesh had also adopted a whole-of-society approach that involved awareness campaigns, treatment and rehabilitation programmes and assistance to victims.

46. Because the illicit trade in drugs was driven by transnational organized groups, international cooperation was needed. Accordingly, Bangladesh had entered into bilateral agreements and border cooperation arrangements with other States, and its participation in joint border patrols and intelligence sharing efforts was producing results. In addition, Bangladesh maintained close communication with INTERPOL and cooperated with other States within the framework of regional initiatives such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. At the recent meeting on the global call to action on the world drug problem, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh had joined world leaders in underscoring the need for global unity to combat the scourge of illicit drugs.

47. **Ms. Carey** (Bahamas) said that her country reiterated its commitment to national, regional and international cooperation to prevent crime and counter the world drug problem through the exchange of best practices and capacity building. Crime and the drug problem threatened peace, security, development and the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms. As a small State with a strategic location for the shipment of illicit drugs and arms and other transnational organized criminal activity, the Bahamas continued to redirect human, technical and financial resources away from critical social and economic development to address those problems.

48. At the national level, the Bahamas had prioritized crime prevention and reduction, focusing on crime hotspots and repeat offenders. It engaged with local communities and youth, utilized forensic technologies and developed public awareness. The Government had entered into several bilateral and regional partnerships to respond to transnational crime and drug activity and worked with the United States and the Caribbean Community to combat illicit trafficking, promote social justice and increase public safety and security. Recently, a law had been drafted that would establish an entity to address corruption and practices related to public disclosure.

49. **Mr. Abdallah** (Nigeria) said that his country had brought its national legislation into compliance with Article 44 of the United Nations Convention against Corruption in order to combat corruption and other transnational organized crimes. In September, Nigeria had hosted the Second International Conference on Combating Illicit Financial Flows and Enhancing Asset Recovery for Sustainable Development.

50. Nigeria, in an effort to counter money-laundering and stem the illicit proceeds of crime, had established an interministerial committee on money-laundering and financial terrorism, with input from law enforcement and regulatory agencies, to coordinate control of transnational organized syndicates. The collaboration had resulted in the confiscation by the Government of ill-gotten assets. In July, the Government had passed a law that provided a more robust legal framework for and greater autonomy to the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit and, as a result, Nigeria had been reinstated into the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units.

51. Nigeria had redoubled its efforts to combat drug proliferation, trafficking and abuse. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency was implementing a national drug control plan to address supply and demand issues, money-laundering and controlled access to narcotics for medical and scientific purposes. Nigeria nevertheless continued to suffer from high rates of abuse of tramadol and cough syrups containing codeine, especially by youths and women.

52. **Mr. Hassani Nejad Pikouhi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that Iran had sustained huge loss of life and property in the course of its campaign against regional and international armed drug traffickers. As part of its a strategy to reduce supply and demand for illegal drugs, the Government had implemented programmes focusing on harm reduction, rehabilitation and social reintegration. It also sought to reduce the prison population by implementing alternative punishments for drug-related offences. Pursuant to a new amendment to the drug trafficking law passed in 2017, the death penalty was limited to armed drug dealers, traffickers who exploited children and smugglers of very large quantities of drugs.

53. Combating transnational organized crime required international cooperation. Concrete measures were needed to prevent, prosecute and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The growing involvement of organized criminal groups in trafficking in cultural property continued to inflict damage on nations.

54. The Islamic Republic of Iran strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and believed that it could be eliminated only through regional and international cooperation. Member States, as well as regional organizations, must avoid any politically-motivated ranking of States for the purposes of international cooperation in combating crime. Such rankings, along with unilateral sanctions, weakened international cooperation.

55. **Ms. Rosa Suazo** (Honduras) said that her country attached great importance to the issue of international drug control as it was experiencing at first hand the harmful effects of drug trafficking on public safety, respect for human rights and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Honduras had joined the recent Global Call to Action on the World Drug Problem, reaffirming its commitment to addressing the issue through a comprehensive approach based on scientific evidence and taking into account the links between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organized crime, including in some cases terrorism, which was understood to be linked to the actions of non-State groups such as criminal gangs.

56. The fight against drug trafficking needed to be approached in a holistic manner, and it was therefore imperative to continue to develop and strengthen comprehensive public health programmes, with due regard to gender, human rights and the inclusion of vulnerable groups. The main goal of its drug policy would be to protect the right to life and human integrity, giving civil society a significant role in the search for solutions and in the development of international drug policies and decision-making processes.

57. As a signatory to the three conventions aimed at eradicating drug-related crimes, in recent years Honduras had dismantled criminal structures and reduced violence and insecurity through the creation and strengthening of government institutions with a mandate to combat drug trafficking, the adoption of tough laws and the dismantling of laboratories for drug production. A number of initiatives had been launched, including awareness-raising campaigns in schools and the establishment of drug treatment centres. An executive secretariat had also been established to assist governmental and non-governmental institutions in their efforts to reduce the supply of and demand for drugs, and monitoring compliance with public policies and the obligations assumed in the drug control treaties and international conventions.

58. **Mr. Niang** (Senegal), recalling the Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, said that, through its adoption of the Doha Declaration on Integrating Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice into the Wider United Nations Agenda

to Address Social and Economic Challenges and to Promote the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels, and Public Participation, the international community had committed to combating drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime, which required a clear expression of national will and strengthened bilateral, regional and international cooperation while upholding the rule of law, democracy and human rights.

59. National and transnational crime could only be overcome by adopting a holistic and preventive approach through flexible social policies that targeted its root causes. Addressing the global drug problem, which remained a serious threat to public safety, security and health, socioeconomic and political stability and sustainable development, required inclusive and innovative approaches, while effectively combatting terrorism required an integrated, multidisciplinary approach, including the collection of reliable data and the sharing of information and analysis.

60. Impunity with regard to transnational criminal organizations too often allowed their members to escape pursuit and punishment by crossing borders, while their victims bore scars for life. In order to fight that scourge, in 2008 the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) had adopted a political declaration and regional action plan establishing a cooperation framework for the prevention of illicit drug trafficking and organized crime. States of the subregion, supported by UNODC, had also developed programmes to strengthen cooperation among criminal justice systems in West Africa and the Sahel, setting up prosecutor and judiciary cooperation networks to improve efficiency and impartiality. As such tools were important for strengthening the rule of law and consolidating peace, the international community and donors were encouraged to support their further development.

61. The fight against drug trafficking and related crimes was a national priority for Senegal, which had established an institutional framework through the creation of an interministerial committee for drug control and a central office for the suppression of illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and adopted a law criminalizing drug trafficking. Supported by UNODC and WHO, Senegal had taken measures to improve its national drug treatment system with the creation of an integrated addictions management centre in Dakar. Senegal was also committed to the fight against trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants through the ratification and transposition into national law of all relevant political conventions and protocols. Member States must work together to urgently find solutions to the serious problems caused by drug trafficking, terrorism and other forms of organized crime.

62. **Mr. Adam** (Sudan) said that his country was making every effort to combat human trafficking, illicit drugs and terrorism, in line with its regional and international commitments. Sudan had enacted a new law on human trafficking in 2017, which had increased penalties for those convicted of trafficking offences, and had also signed border control agreements with neighbouring States to strengthen its efforts to combat arms trafficking and the activities of organized criminal gangs and terrorists. In July 2017, Sudan had hosted an international conference on human trafficking and smuggling in the Horn of Africa.

63. His country had adopted a national strategy on illicit drugs in 2015 and had also passed a number of related laws, including a law to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism. The financial investigations unit had been strengthened and Sudan had also streamlined the procedures for dealing with extradition requests and seizure of illicit financial assets. Sudan had also amended its legislation on drugs and psychotropic substances to bring it into line with relevant international instruments and had adopted regulations to ensure that drugs were used appropriately in the medical field. Sudan had also taken steps to strengthen the relationship between citizens and the police in urban areas, which had led to a reduction in crime.

64. Sudan called on peace partners, donor countries and other friendly States to increase their financial and technical assistance to countries in the Horn of Africa with a view to combating human trafficking, the illicit drug trade and international terrorism. In that connection, he drew attention to the exemplary cooperation between his country and the European Union in its efforts to combat human trafficking as part of the Khartoum process. It was imperative, moreover, to address the root causes of illegal migration flows, including, first and foremost, the poverty into which so many in the region were born.

65. **Mr. Leong** (Malaysia) said that the failure of Governments to tackle new and emerging forms of crime and drug abuse, which threatened security and stability and hampered social and economic development, would lead to serious repercussions. Crime prevention and drug control needed to become top priorities for both individual Member States and the global community as a whole, as advanced technology and communication tools were being used to extend such activities beyond national borders and jurisdictions.

66. Malaysia had strengthened national legislation and enhanced the capacity of law enforcement agencies in its own fight against crime and drugs and implemented demand reduction approaches through treatment, rehabilitation, prevention, enforcement and harm reduction. However, Malaysia also recognized that no country could fight crime and illicit drugs unilaterally. It maintained close bilateral cooperation in that field with many countries, and at the regional level with the States members of ASEAN, through various security and crime prevention platforms and instruments. At the international level it was a party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the three international drug control conventions. Malaysia would continue to support the work of UNODC in its mandate on crime prevention, criminal justice and drug control and would remain steadfast in its national and international efforts in that area.

67. **Ms. Bouchikhi** (Morocco), recalling that criminal justice was a shared responsibility if the Sustainable Development Goals were to be met, said that preventing and combating international crime and drug trafficking required greater attention and support from the international community and strengthened partnerships among Member States. Given the continually evolving threat of transnational crime, in particular the alarming increase in the cultivation, trafficking and consumption of drugs of all categories, the appearance of new psychotropic substances and the online dissemination of new consumption patterns, new international strategies required greater coordination with regard to the exchange of information in order to take into account modern realities.

68. Africa had become a central transit platform for drug trafficking, through terrorist networks and insurrection movements throughout the region, threatening peace and stability in the Sahel and Maghreb regions and along the Atlantic coastline. In response, Morocco had recently adopted a clear, multidimensional anti-crime strategy to ensure the safety and security of its citizens and increased its bilateral cooperation with several countries, as well as with multilateral and regional specialized organizations, in particular the International Narcotics Control Board and UNODC. As a result, between 2015 and 2018, its national police force had arrested 301 people for which international arrest warrants had been issued and distributed 346 international arrest warrants issued by specialized judiciary authorities. Moreover, in October 2017, the police force carried out a major drug bust, seizing a record amount of raw cocaine with a market value of some $2.75 billion, leading to 15 arrests and the dismantlement of a sophisticated drug ring operating throughout Morocco, Latin America, Europe and the Arab world.

69. **Mr. Mattar** (Egypt) said that fully exercising national sovereignty and ensuring respect for the rule of law could significantly bolster efforts to promote sustainable development, whereas criminal activity, including drug-related offences, could seriously undermine security and the stability of societies. It was thus crucial for Member States to make effective use of recent technological advances that could facilitate efforts to combat criminal activity, including new forms of crime such as Internet-based theft, money-laundering, and terrorism financing.

70. The illegal trade in antiquities was of great concern to Egypt, and his Government had therefore taken a number of steps to protect its cultural heritage, including the introduction of stricter penalties for the smuggling of cultural artefacts, the signing of international cooperation agreements to combat the illegal trafficking of antiquities and facilitate the recovery of looted items, and the development of training courses for professionals involved in efforts to safeguard the country's heritage.

71. Egypt had launched a new national strategy to combat human trafficking that had been drafted with input from the relevant State agencies and civil society organizations. In 2016, a law had been enacted to fight illegal migration and the smuggling of migrants that imposed punitive sanctions on offenders. Those efforts had enabled it to enhance its control of its maritime borders and bring increasing numbers of traffickers to justice. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also organized a number of training workshops on border management and combating human trafficking for African diplomats and members of peacekeeping forces.

72. Egypt believed that a clear vision was needed for the period following the 2019 expiration of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem, especially as its objectives had not been achieved. Egypt therefore supported its extension in order to avoid any gaps in the regime for confronting the global drug problem. In that connection, Egypt had recently participated with more than 125 States in a high-level event on the margins of the General Assembly on the world's illicit drug problem. At home, Egypt was working with a range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, to combat drug addiction by supporting programmes to raise awareness of the dangers of illicit drugs, provide treatment to addicts and reintegrate former drug users into society. Egypt had received international

recognition for its efforts in that area and, in September 2018, the United Nations Interagency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases (UNIATF) had presented an award to the Egyptian Minister of Social Solidarity in recognition of her outstanding contribution to non-communicable disease prevention and control.

73. To combat corruption, Egypt had adopted robust national policies to uphold the principles of separation of powers, rule of law, transparency and respect for human rights. However, for Egypt to combat crime and illicit drugs and to strengthen its criminal justice system effectively, it would need additional support from the international community, particularly in the areas of capacity building and asset recovery. He called on Member States and the United Nations to strengthen their cooperation frameworks and training programmes in those areas.

74. **Ms. Cruz Yábar** (Spain) said that crime prevention, criminal justice and international drug control were of extreme importance in protecting the freedom, rights and well-being of citizens. Action taken to combat the crimes addressed by the Committee must take into account both the low likelihood of their eradication in the near future and their ever-changing nature. The transnational character of those crimes required collective action.

75. Trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal and trafficking in human organs was a heinous crime that violated the most basic of human rights, often victimizing members of the most marginalized communities. Combating it required dedicated international action on three fronts, justice, health and human rights, to develop national policies and international cooperation frameworks. Its frequent association with organized crime and issues of extraterritoriality complicated those efforts, posing challenges in gathering necessary information and maintaining adequate records. A detailed report on the subject from the World Health Organization would help to clarify the situation.

76. The only way to fight such crime was through strict respect for the rule of law, including on the international stage, by further strengthening the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity, through the Organized Crime Convention and the various conventions and protocols on combating terrorism, drug trafficking and corruption. Spain looked forward to addressing cyberterrorism, electronic evidence, trafficking in persons and the protection of cultural heritage during the current session. It was also crucial to address and combat, in line with technical support provided by UNODC and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, all aspects of drug abuse, which caused serious and highly complex social development problems in many countries.

77. **Mr. Asruchin** (Indonesia) said that the work of UNODC in enhancing international cooperation and facilitating technical assistance on crime prevention and criminal justice had been beneficial in attaining the effective implementation of the Organized Crime Convention. Indonesia urged Member States that had not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention and stood ready to work with other States parties towards its comprehensive implementation and that of its Protocols.

78. Trafficking in persons was a heinous crime that affected safety, security and social development in all countries, degrading human dignity and denying people the enjoyment of a peaceful and prosperous life. It must therefore be taken seriously and addressed collectively and comprehensively. Preventing and combating emerging forms of crime, such as cybercrime and trafficking in cultural property and endangered species of wild fauna and flora, in particular fisheries, must also be addressed collectively. The continuation and expansion of the work of UNDOC in that regard, with international support, was therefore greatly appreciated.

79. Achieving a world free of drug abuse required comprehensive, integrated and balanced demand reduction strategies, including international law enforcement cooperation, to deter criminal syndicates and drug traffickers. In the previous six years, Indonesia had established seven multilateral memorandums of understanding aimed at preventing and combating illicit drug trafficking. It also regularly sent law enforcement officers to regional or international training programmes and workshops. Successful drug control action must balance prevention efforts and eradication measures that were consistent with international treaties, while also respecting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. Despite the progress made, Indonesia still faced challenges in countering the illicit trafficking of the many incoming forms of synthetic drugs from various regions. Strict law enforcement measures were an essential part of its strategy.

80. **Mr. Mikayilli** (Azerbaijan) said that corruption had a detrimental effect on democracy, the rule of law and sustainable development and was an obstacle to the effective promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. At a high-level General Assembly debate held in May 2018 to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of United Nations Convention against Corruption, increasing corruption

had been recognized as a key driver of organized crime. In compliance with that Convention, ratified by Azerbaijan in 2005, the country had established specialized anti-corruption policymaking and law enforcement agencies. In 2012, Azerbaijan had participated in the first cycle of the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the Convention; the second review cycle was currently under way. Azerbaijan had also adopted four national action plans to combat corruption, with significant progress recorded, and established a dedicated state agency to provide easy-access, transparent public services, with zero tolerance for corruption.

81. Azerbaijan had strengthened its national anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financing system, successfully passing through four rounds of evaluations by the Council of Europe, and, in May 2018, had established an independent financial monitoring service to improve legislative compliance in that regard. The Government was also currently implementing a national action plan on trafficking in persons, through continuous improvements to national legislation and law enforcement, including the addition of four articles to the Criminal Code defining liability for trafficking in persons and the establishment of a special police unit within the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

82. Azerbaijan was fully committed to cooperating with Member States and international organizations to address all forms of organized crime. In that regard, it had signed more than 100 bilateral and multilateral instruments on information-sharing, the joint investigation of crimes and cooperation in training and education.

83. **Mr. Komara** (Guinea), noting that his country had ratified the major subregional, regional and international legal instruments against transnational crime and had adopted both the UNODC Regional Programme for West Africa and the ECOWAS regional action plan, said that organized crime threatened human peace and security, violated human rights and undermined socioeconomic and cultural development. Because poverty and unemployment created fertile ground for drug abuse and trafficking to flourish, eradicating transnational organized crime required national and global action focused on the prevention and suppression of drug trafficking and on support for and the reintegration of its victims.

84. Owing to porous borders and weak Governments, the ECOWAS region, including Guinea, had long been used as a link in the illicit drug distribution chain between Latin America and Europe. Nevertheless, political stabilization, combined with the creation of a specialized department for combating drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime, the establishment of a national school of police, justice reform, the suspension of magistrates for corruption and regular arrests of human traffickers along the border, had enabled Guinea to redouble its efforts against such crimes and stem the tide.

85. Notwithstanding such progress, his Government continued to face challenges. Grateful for the unwavering support of its bilateral and multilateral partners, Guinea requested the international community to continue to strengthen cooperation among all stakeholders in order to rid humanity of all forms of crime.

86. **Ms. Banaken** (Cameroon) said that, while transnational organized crime and financial crime posed major threats to the security, stability and rule of law of all countries, the greatest concern for Cameroon was terrorism. In response to attacks in recent years by Boko Haram in the Far North region and by secessionists in the North-West and South-West regions of the country, the Government had, among other measures, strengthened political and legal institutions, conducted awareness-raising campaigns and implemented education and security reforms.

87. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), his Government had adopted a law aimed at bringing to justice those involved in terrorism, in line with international standards and international and regional commitments made by Cameroon. In its efforts, his country was guided by respect for human rights and compliance with the relevant United Nations principles, including the fundamental rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, as evidenced during the twenty-third special session of the Human Rights Council on Boko Haram, held in April 2015.

88. In Cameroon, the use of psychotropic drugs went hand in hand with an increase in the commission of terrorist acts by both secessionists and members of Boko Haram, while drug trafficking was used to finance terrorist networks. Despite the numerous national and international measures already taken to counter terrorism, that threat persisted, owing to its transnational character and to the increasing openness of borders through social media and through new threats such as cybercrime. Countries were therefore urged to strengthen multilateral cooperation, as recommended in the Doha Declaration on crime prevention, including by ratifying the Organized Crime Convention and its Optional Protocols.

89. **Mr. Mohamed** (Libya) said that worsening levels of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion were

exacerbating illegal drug-related criminal activity and corruption in many parts of the world, while weak security and oversight in many countries and their limited capacity to address those challenges were causing further economic, social and political instability. Robust regional and international cooperation was needed to combat the global drug problem, and many States would require sustained and predictable technical, financial and capacity-building assistance if they were to play an effective role in that regard.

90. Concerted efforts were also needed to combat transnational crime and trafficking in persons, which were undermining the security and stability of many societies and impeding development. Libya was seeking to enhance its collaboration with neighbouring countries with a view to combating transnational crime and trafficking and called for the effective implementation of the recommendations contained in the outcome document of the regional conference on border security that had been held in Tripoli in 2012. Libya also called on the Security Council to avoid a selective and politicized approach when imposing penalties on those involved in human trafficking and to impose sanctions on all those who had committed trafficking offences, regardless of where they were located.

91. Libya reiterated its call on UNODC to provide it with the technical and capacity-building assistance it needed so that it could uphold its international obligations. In particular, it called on the Office to help Libya and other affected countries recover their stolen financial assets so that those assets could be used to promote security, stability and prosperity. Libya looked forward to the re-opening of the UNODC subregional programme office for the Maghreb countries in Tripoli and the resumption of its activities there at the earliest opportunity.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/73/SR.7

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Chair: Mr. Saikal ..... (Afghanistan)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Statement by the President of the General Assembly

1. **Ms. Espinosa Garcés** (President of the General Assembly) said that, with its focus on social, humanitarian and cultural issues, the Third Committee could play an important role in making the United Nations more relevant. Five of her seven priorities were within its purview: women, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees, young people and decent employment.

2. The Committee's collective efforts could help to break the vicious cycle of women's inequality, which was of particular importance to her as the fourth woman to preside over the General Assembly. In that connection, she was working actively to convene a summit on women in power in March 2019.

3. The Committee played a critical role in advancing the rights of persons with disabilities and should incorporate a disability perspective in all of its work. Regarding migrants and refugees, the global compact on refugees and the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration would promote their dignity and well-being. The upcoming Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration was thus a significant milestone.

4. Adopted in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had changed lives around the globe. During the current session, the General Assembly would devote a plenary meeting to the celebration of its seventieth anniversary.

5. She called on the delegations to tackle the sensitive and complex issues before them with openness, tolerance, a willingness to compromise and an acute awareness of their responsibility to produce results with a real impact in the lives of people, especially the most vulnerable.

Agenda item 29: Advancement of women (A/73/38, A/73/263, A/73/266, A/73/285, A/73/294 and A/73/301)

6. **Ms. Regnér** (Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)) welcomed the award of the Nobel Peace Prize for 2018 to Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, who had worked hard to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict. The emphasis of the President of the General Assembly on gender equality would give needed impetus to eliminating discrimination and violence against women and girls.

7. The commitments in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action provided a blueprint for action. Almost 25 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women, women and girls were demanding accountability for results. In September, UN-Women had issued a guidance note for comprehensive national reviews. She encouraged all countries to initiate such reviews and to give high priority to any problems revealed, including shrinking space for civil society, which could limit the contribution of the feminist movement and women's and girls' organizations. The reviews should mobilize all stakeholders around new and renewed dialogue. UN-Women stood ready to provide steady and meaningful support, and it was counting on its partners for the required resources. It looked forward to the 2020 high-level meeting of the General Assembly to mark the anniversary of the Conference and accelerate the realization of gender equality.

8. Implementation of the Secretary General's system-wide strategy on gender parity was moving forward. For the first time in United Nations history, full parity had been achieved in the Senior Management Group and among the resident coordinators of United Nations country teams. UN-Women supported those efforts through guidance and system-wide coordination.

9. It was important to address the root causes of violence against women. A comprehensive approach to preventing and eliminating it in all of its forms would enable progress towards many Sustainable Development Goals. Additional attention should be given to marginalized groups and to women and girls facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

10. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls (A/73/294), she said that it focused on sexual harassment, including that facilitated by technology. The emergence of solidary movements around the world revealed the universal, all-pervasive nature of sexual harassment and the inadequacy of existing prevention and redress mechanisms. The report called for laws that recognized sexual harassment as a form of discrimination against women, as well as greater efforts to enact institutional changes that prevented such violence, created safe reporting environments and ensured comprehensive services for victims and survivors.

11. The ongoing work of the International Labour Conference on a new global standard on violence and harassment in the world of work would expand workplace obligations to address violence, including sexual harassment and domestic violence. Within the

United Nations system, a recently formed task force on addressing sexual harassment had established, inter alia, a uniform definition of sexual harassment and a system-wide database to prevent the hiring of individuals whose previous employment had been terminated for sexual harassment. The Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women would also present her report on violence against women in politics (A/73/301), a phenomenon which merited worldwide attention and action.

12. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the trafficking of women and girls (A/73/263), she said that the Sustainable Development Goals targeted many of the contributing factors, such as poverty, lack of decent work opportunities and limited access to education. It was necessary to address not only those factors but also the demand for trafficked women and girls. Technology facilitated such trafficking, but it also offered new possibilities for combating it. The report called for measures to address the weak enforcement of anti-trafficking laws and extremely low conviction rates as well as to promote a more gender-sensitive, survivor-centred response.

13. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation (A/73/266), she said that it pointed to critical gains. However, it also indicated that, at the current rate of progress, they would be cancelled by population growth. Furthermore, the practice was becoming more global, owing to increased population movement. Other challenges included limited enforcement of national legislation, increasing medicalization and limited funding for the implementation of policies and programmes, including monitoring and evaluation. The report called on States to address root causes such as attitudes and belief systems, gender-based discrimination and unequal power relations and to design more targeted responses for groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

14. At its seventy-second session, the General Assembly had adopted significantly more resolutions with a gender perspective, and the Second Committee had issued an invitation to organize a side event on making infrastructure investments work for women and girls at the next session. In 2019, the Commission on the Status of Women would address social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

15. **Ms. Londén** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on intensifying efforts to end obstetric fistula within a generation (A/73/285), said that the condition was both preventable and highly treatable. Its persistence was a sign of global inequality and an indication that health systems were failing to serve the poorest and most vulnerable women and girls. Given the root causes of obstetric fistula, elimination was tied to the achievement of numerous Sustainable Development Goals. Since former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had issued his challenge to end obstetric fistula within a generation, each of the more than 55 fistula-affected countries supported by the Campaign to End Fistula had begun to plan and implement policies and systems for its elimination. The report recommended, inter alia, that those countries invest much more in health systems and secure significantly greater, sustained and predictable financial support for universal access to health care, even in the most remote areas; implement or strengthen national strategies, action plans and budgets for improving access to prevention, treatment and follow-up; include ending fistula in sustainable development plans; establish or strengthen national task forces on its elimination; strengthen awareness and advocacy efforts and increase and improve research, data collection, monitoring and evaluation. They also needed to address underlying factors by ensuring universal access to education, ending violence against women and girls, halting child marriage and preventing teen pregnancy. Lastly, civil society, women's groups and communities, including young people, men, boys and fistula survivors, must be mobilized to advocate for universal access to health care, human rights and the destigmatization of fistula sufferers.

16. The global community would gather later that month at the Global Conference on Primary Health Care to renew their commitment to developing people-centred primary health care. The conference represented a golden opportunity to ensure that the most marginalized, including obstetric fistula survivors, were not left behind.

17. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan) said that Sudanese laws criminalized female genital mutilation and stressed enforcement. Many national efforts to end female genital mutilation had been abandoned, which skewed the statistics in the report and obscured the gains achieved by the Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting.

18. **Ms. Abdelkawy** (Egypt) said that the provision of the Egyptian Penal Code criminalizing female genital mutilation had been amended to make the practice a felony and increase the penalties. The outdated statistics in paragraphs 13 and 14 of the Secretary-General's report undermined the efforts of the Member States and

the Joint Programme, and in paragraph 20, the projected rise in the number of girls undergoing female genital mutilation was also based on old numbers. According to data collected in March 2018 by the Egyptian statistical organization, the current incidence of female genital mutilation in Egypt was 58 per cent, in line with the Government target of 35 per cent by 2020 and full elimination by 2030. As indicated in the report itself, some Egyptian families had publicly declared that they would abandon the practice.

19. **Ms. Leinarte** (Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women), addressing the Third Committee for the last time in her capacity as Chair, said that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was continuing to raise Sustainable Development Goal-related issues during the constructive dialogues and to encourage States parties to report on their efforts to meet the relevant targets. Most of the 28 concluding observations adopted since October 2017 had been linked to the relevant Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

20. The Committee had continued to work with UN-Women, the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to develop methodologies for selected Goal indicators. It had signed a framework of cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and it had made substantive submissions to the high-level political forum on sustainable development regarding the links between international human rights standards and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

21. In view of intimidation and reprisals against women human rights defenders who cooperated with the Committee, it had appointed a rapporteur and alternate rapporteur on intimidation or reprisals. It had also endorsed the Guidelines against Intimidation or Reprisal ("San José Guidelines") (HRI/MC/2015/6). The Committee stood ready to work with the international community and other United Nations entities in that area.

22. In 2018, the Committee had adopted general recommendation No. 37 on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, which provided guidance on measures for achieving gender equality as a factor that would reinforce the resilience of women and communities in the context of climate-induced disasters. It had also begun drafting a general recommendation on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration. The new general recommendation would address gendered dimensions such as the risk factors that exposed women and girls on the move to sexual exploitation and abuse. It would also tackle State parties' responsibility in combating organized crime, including illicit financial flows. The Committee would hold a discussion of the draft general recommendation during its seventy-third session in July 2019, after which it would open the document for comments and conduct regional consultations.

23. The Committee was continuing to implement most of the measures in General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system. The simplified reporting procedure was available to requesting States parties that had previously submitted an initial report considered under the regular procedure and had also submitted an updated common core document no more than five years prior to the request. Twenty-two States parties had made requests, and 12 had met the aforementioned conditions. In addition, the Committee had increased its use of videoconferencing for consultations with United Nations country teams and constructive dialogues with Member States. However, it still lacked adequate human and financial resources to address the increasing numbers of complaints received through the communications procedure or information received under the inquiry procedure.

24. The Committee's partners, including the inter-agency group on reporting to the Committee; International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia-Pacific, and the Geneva Academy for International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, had provided valuable support to its work. The Committee was continuing to engage new partners, such as the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization, the European Commission and the International Organization for Migration, all of which had recently participated in a seminar on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration. Lastly, she thanked the secretariat of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for its support despite scarce resources. She remained hopeful that the 2020 treaty body review process would address the debilitating resource problem.

25. **Ms. Yasunaga** (Japan) said that Japan strongly supported the Committee's latest general recommendation on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change and had been implementing an action plan to promote women's participation in decision-making related to disaster prevention and recovery. It also welcomed the election of a Japanese member. She asked what additional steps the Committee

could take to implement its mandate and what challenges it faced.

26. **Mr. Bourtembourg** (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union commended the quality of the Committee's work under administrative and financial constraints, as well as its interaction with a wide range of human rights actors, including civil society organizations and human rights defenders. It applauded the Committee's efforts to reduce the delay between the submission of reports and their consideration, as well as to make its concluding observations more succinct, country-specific and user friendly, although it urged further improvement in that area. The European Union called on all States that had not yet done so to ratify the Convention and its Optional Protocol and to fulfil their obligations under the Convention, and it encouraged States that had made reservations to consider withdrawing them.

27. Noting the new general recommendations on the right of girls and women to education and on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction, he said that the European Union found both areas critical to ensure that women and girls could enjoy the full range of human rights in all contexts. He would appreciate a status report on the Committee's work on the proposed general recommendations on gender stereotypes and indigenous women and wondered whether it had considered developing a general recommendation on gender equality in the digital age. He would also appreciate hearing her views on priorities for the 2020 treaty body review.

28. **Mr. Holtz** (United Kingdom) said that his country had appointed a special envoy for gender equality in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. At the international level, it was committed to promoting gender equality in its work and to ensuring that girls across the Commonwealth received 12 years of education. It looked forward to a constructive dialogue with the Committee during the consideration of its eighth periodic report. Noting the successful interventions to address the gender dimensions of modern slavery highlighted in the Secretary-General's report on trafficking in women and girls (A/73/263), he said that the United Kingdom had endorsed the Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. He asked how the Committee could drive action to combat modern slavery.

29. **Mr. Kelly** (Ireland) said that the Committee and its reporting process were essential to attaining equality between men and women. As the current Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, Ireland remained committed to achieving gender equality at home and abroad. It welcomed the Committee's decision to establish a working group on cooperation with national human rights institutions, its adoption of general recommendations Nos. 35, 36 and 37 and its decision to prepare new general recommendations on gender stereotypes, indigenous women and trafficking in women in the context of global migration. Regarding the proposed general recommendation on indigenous women, he wondered to what extent it might draw on the agreed conclusions of the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, given the links between rural women and indigenous women.

30. **Mr. Elizondo** (Mexico) said that, in keeping with its policy of openness and cooperation, a Mexican delegation of senior representatives of all levels of government as well as autonomous bodies had met with the Committee in July 2018 for constructive dialogue on its ninth national report. The report had contained input from the three branches of government and civil society, including indigenous women's movements.

31. **Mr. Chernenko** (Russian Federation), referring to General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, asked what steps had been taken to ensure the fair allocation of time between Committee experts and national delegations during the review, to reduce the number of concluding observations and to ensure multilingualism in the work of the Committee. He reiterated his delegation's dissatisfaction with the follow-up methodology, which was not specified in the Convention and made equal and mutually respectful dialogue more difficult. In particular, the assessment category "Information or measures taken are contrary to or reflect rejection of the recommendation", implied guilt. The Committee was not the arbiter of eternal truth.

32. **Ms. Leinarte** (Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) said that, in view of the Committee's limited financial resources, it had decided to work on only one general recommendation at a time. It had chosen to begin with the one on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, but it would not neglect the others. While past general recommendations had taken up to five years, it had been able to adopt general recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence very quickly, and during its last session, it had had time to evaluate the draft concept notes on possible new general recommendations on gender stereotypes and the human rights of indigenous women.

33. Regarding General Assembly resolution 68/268, the Committee was endeavouring to process requests to

use the simplified reporting procedure efficiently and attentively, and it had also developed a very efficient follow-up procedure. Some changes, such as a single national report for all of the treaty bodies, would need to be discussed and decided by the States. The Committee had yet to discuss the new reporting formats in depth.

34. The Committee could address modern slavery by means of a new general recommendation, but it did not yet have even a draft concept note on the subject. Given that women constituted half of trafficking victims in general but almost all of sexual trafficking victims, any general recommendation would focus on modern sexual slavery.

35. The Committee was trying to achieve a more balanced allocation of constructive dialogue time and now had various rules for allocating minutes to the task force. While the task force sometimes received more time than the national delegations, it was important for the delegations to hear the opinions of its members, and most were anxious to do so.

36. **Ms. Šimonović** (Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences), introducing her report on violence against women in politics (A/73/301), said that it took many forms, from misogynistic and sexist verbal attacks to sexual harassment and even femicide. It was intended to discourage women from being politically active, thereby preserving traditional gender roles and stereotypes and maintaining structural and gender-based inequalities. The perpetrators included not only political adversaries but also peers, family members and friends.

37. Violence against women in politics constituted a serious violation of human rights and an obstacle to equal political participation and gender equality. Specific laws and policies were urgently needed. Political parties should adopt zero-tolerance policies on all forms of violence against women in politics and during elections, and national parliaments should establish codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms. Men parliamentarians must be included in the prevention and response efforts.

38. Election observers should receive training, and the reports of election observation missions should include the number or percentage of women who voted and were elected, along with quantitative and qualitative data on election-related violence against women. The missions should share their reports with the relevant treaty bodies and special procedures.

39. Independent United Nations and regional monitoring mechanisms in the area of women's rights and violence against women could play a key role in combating and preventing violence against women in politics by strengthening their monitoring roles in that area. Increased awareness of violence against women in politics was essential for the successful implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on the inclusion of women in peace processes.

40. **Mr. Hendricks** (South Africa) asked what could be done to counter and prevent the intimidation of South African women striving for leadership positions in political and public institutions.

41. **Mr. Bastida Peydro** (Spain) said that his country had been one of the first to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). For the first time, the Spanish Government currently had more women than men. Furthermore, its Congress had approved a state pact to combat violence against women with a five-year budget of 1 billion euros. The National Strategy for the Eradication of Violence against Women (2013–2016) had been successful, and it was preparing a new strategy for 2018–2022. As a member of the Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment, it would continue to work actively to strengthen the internal normative framework and actions of the United Nations.

42. **Mr. Carabalí Baquero** (Colombia) said that his country promoted the participation of women at both the international and national levels. The proportion of seats held by women in the national legislature had increased significantly from 2010 to 2018, and the recently formed Government had an equal number of men and women. With respect to the judiciary, gender equity was taken into consideration when drawing up lists of candidates for the upper courts.

43. **Mr. Jelinski** (Canada) said that his delegation was deeply concerned that more than half of the women parliamentarians in the regions surveyed had experienced sexual harassment. Domestically, Canada had strengthened its legislation for the prevention of sexual harassment and violence in the workplace. Steps should be taken to address international gaps that allowed violence against women and girls in digital contexts and to achieve a better understanding of how digital technologies affected women's participation in politics. He asked how national election observation could be improved to address and prevent violence before, during and after elections.

44. **Ms. Oehri** (Liechtenstein) asked for recommendations on improving the representation of women in high-level political office in Liechtenstein.

45. **Mr. Burri** (Switzerland) said that his delegation welcomed and encouraged the Special Rapporteur's initiative to develop institutional links and thematic cooperation between independent global and regional mechanisms on violence and discrimination against women. The Istanbul Convention had entered into force in Switzerland in April 2018. Regarding sexist stereotypes, he would appreciate examples of media-based preventive measures involving men as defenders of equality.

46. **Ms. Tasuja** (Estonia) asked if the high-level panel on institutional cooperation between independent global and regional mechanisms dealing with violence and discrimination against women held in March 2018 might lead to a practical cooperation project, such as a global campaign to end violence against women in politics. She would also like to know about ways to promote the positive aspects of social media and to bridge the digital gender divide.

47. **Ms. Feldman** (Australia) said that Australia's political parties had committed to achieving 50 per cent female representation by 2025. Its Sex Discrimination Commissioner was leading the world's first national inquiry into sexual harassment in the workplace.

48. **Mr. de Souza Monteiro** (Brazil) said that in 2018 the Superior Electoral Court had ruled that political parties must use 30 per cent of public funding and television and radio campaign time to the support women candidates. His Government would identify the killers of Councillor Marielle Franco and bring them to justice. He asked how actions to eliminate violence against women in politics could support efforts to eliminate violence against women in general.

49. **Mr. Bourtembourg** (Observer for the European Union) said that, under the joint European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls, 50 million euros had been budgeted for a programme to end femicide in Latin America. The United Nations had also specifically agreed to work towards the elimination of violence against women in the context of the European Union Gender Action Plan 2016–2020. With respect to the Special Rapporteur's recommendation that Governments adopt and implement legislation prohibiting violence against women in politics, he asked whether they needed specific laws with different penalties for acts of violence in the political setting and, if so, why.

50. **Ms. Přikrylová** (Czech Republic) said that, at the September session of the Human Rights Council, the Czech delegation had introduced a resolution on equal participation in political and public affairs, requesting the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to disseminate and promote the use of its draft guidelines on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs. The Czech Republic would be focusing on implementing those guidelines, and she urged other States to do the same. She would like to know which of the recommendations for electoral management bodies and election observation missions were most urgent.

51. **Mr. Holtz** (United Kingdom) said that violence against women and girls, including intimate partner violence, was preventable. His country's What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls Programme was pioneering new approaches in Pakistan and Afghanistan that had reduced violence and corporal punishment in schools by as much as half, and its work with faith leaders in conflict-affected communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had helped to reduce reported intimate partner violence dramatically. The United Kingdom intended to make the full results of the What Works programme available later in the year. He would like to know what was being done to support the collection and dissemination of best practices for preventing violence against women and girls. He would also appreciate further information on interinstitutional cooperation.

52. **Ms. Calçada Estrela** (Portugal) asked what steps could be taken to encourage more women to enter politics.

53. **Ms. Dravec** (Slovenia) asked what monitoring measures States should implement to address violence against women in politics.

54. **Mr. Kelly** (Ireland) said that his delegation would appreciate examples of practical, non-legislative measures that had proved effective for creating more encouraging environments for women to participate in political and public life. Ireland condemned the targeting of women human rights defenders and called for prompt investigation to end impunity for those attacks. State funding of political parties in Ireland was dependent on gender balance in the selection of candidates for election in order to promote equal participation of women in politics. However, it was necessary to take a comprehensive approach and think further than representation.

55. **Mr. Chernenko** (Russian Federation) said that the best way to ensure equal opportunities and participation in political life for men and women was to break down barriers and create equal conditions, taking into account national specificities. The concept of gender violence in politics was an exclusive invention of the Special Rapporteur. Violence against women should be addressed comprehensively, not divided into subcategories.

56. **Ms. Edison** (Nigeria) said that, in anticipation of the upcoming elections, the National Democratic Institute had launched a campaign to stop violence against women in politics. She wondered whether the causes and consequences of violence against women in politics were different in developed and developing countries and whether the Special Rapporteur recommended similar actions for countries in both groups.

57. **Ms. Gebrekidan** (Eritrea) asked what innovative steps could be taken to increase societal awareness of violence against women.

58. **Ms. Šimonović** (Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences) said that the United Nations human rights mechanisms needed to join forces with regional mechanisms on topics of common concern in order to be able to carry out their mandates with the resources available. They were finding that they had many shared issues, such as violence against women in politics, that should be addressed through a thematic approach. She herself had wondered about the usefulness of presenting different reports to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. The report on violence against women in politics had been prepared in consultation with UN-Women, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and regional mechanisms dealing with women's rights. Thereafter, she had met with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in October 2018, and she would be meeting again with the aforementioned partners in 2019 to develop a joint agenda. However, cooperation should be expanded to include other treaty monitoring mechanisms such as the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), which monitored the Istanbul Convention, and the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI), which monitored the Convention of Belém do Pará.

59. She did not have sufficient data to back up recommendations for good practices, legislation or preventive measures or identify the similarities and differences between developed and developing countries. Data was being collected by national observation bodies and international monitoring missions, but it was not being shared with the independent global and regional mechanisms. It was necessary to join forces to develop a good method of collecting and sharing data.

60. Regarding the small number of women in political life, the mechanisms dealing with women's rights had hitherto generally advocated temporary special measures to increase their participation, but progress had been slow. It was important to look at obstacles to participation such as violence against women in politics.

61. As to whether or not special laws were needed on violence against women in politics, the answer depended on a State's existing laws. All States should have a general law addressing violence against women in all settings, including politics. However, a separate law might be needed, for example, to give women parliamentarians an efficient mechanism for lodging complaints of sexual harassment or to protect women in the context of political parties.

62. With respect to acts of intimidation, it was important to have support mechanisms in place and to address prevention. Regarding online violence against women, she had covered that subject in a report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/38/47), which contained many recommendations. Ultimately, however, the major social media platforms would have to do their part.

63. With regard to the possibility of a global campaign to end violence against women in politics, action on new topics such as political or online violence would depend on the outcome of the 2020 review. Meetings between the United Nations and regional mechanisms were currently funded by the Republic of Korea, Spain and Switzerland. She hoped that in the future they would have a broader base of support, including funding through the United Nations system.

64. **Ms. Regnér** (Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) said that she looked forward to further collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on the subject of violence against women in politics. It was not only a critical issue but also a current focus of interest throughout the United Nations system. In many countries, the problem was even worse at the local level.

65. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that peace, security and sustainable development could only be achieved through the effective participation of women at all levels of decision-making. The Constitutive Act of the African Union, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the New Partnership for Africa's Development all provided a basis for the pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment, and the recently adopted the African Union Gender Strategy (2018–2027) defined priority actions, investment centres and strategic partnerships.

66. Despite significant progress, African women still faced many challenges, including violence, female genital mutilation, early and forced marriage, exclusion from economic opportunities, underrepresentation in leadership positions, gender inequality in care and domestic work, legal impediments to land ownership and inheritance, and poor health and reproductive services. In that connection, the African Group urged continued support for the Campaign to End Fistula, particularly in high-burden countries.

67. With only two years remaining until the end of the African Women's Decade, the States were stepping up their efforts. The theme for 2019 would be "Women in Decision-making". Already, the newly established African Women Leaders Network had launched the African Women Leadership Fund, formed the Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network and, most recently, helped to organize a high-level side event on leveraging the African Union and United Nations partnership to enhance the role and leadership of women in Africa's transformation. However, sustaining the Network remained a serious challenge, and the African Group urged its partners to maintain their support.

68. **Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of Older Persons, said that the ageing of societies worldwide presented new challenges for women's enjoyment of their human rights. Older women must be empowered to exercise their rights, not only as beneficiaries of special care and social protection but also as active agents and beneficiaries of change. Given the differential impact of ageing on women and men, a gender perspective should be integrated into all policies, programmes and legislation.

69. Gender inequalities and disparities in economic power-sharing, unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work, lack of technological and financial support for women's entrepreneurship, unequal access to labour markets, land and credit, and harmful traditional practices had constrained women's economic empowerment. Recalling that the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing called for the elimination of social and economic inequalities based on age, gender or any other ground, he said that special social protection measures were required to address poverty among older women, who often bore family care responsibilities incompatible with inflexible working conditions, mandatory retirement ages and meagre pensions or social security benefits, leaving them extremely vulnerable.

70. The members of the Group were committed to incorporating the gender dimensions of ageing into their social and economic strategies, policies and actions. A positive view of ageing was an integral aspect of the Madrid Plan of Action. In modern societies, older persons, especially women, were often seen as dependent and a burden on society, reinforcing exclusionary practices at the local and national levels. Achieving gender equality and respect for the human rights for women of all ages would require renewed commitment, improved, rigorously implemented policies and increased funding from all sources, including official development assistance.

71. **Mr. Ten-Pow** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the CARICOM member States had committed at the highest political level to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Thanks to CARICOM regional coordination, technical support, model legislation and research and data collection, they had made great strides, particularly with respect to mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development of national policies and programmes, improving education and training opportunities for women and girls and increasing women's presence in leadership positions and decision-making.

72. Nearly all of the Caribbean countries had legislation and public policy on acts of physical, psychological and sexual violence. They continued to review and strengthen their national legal frameworks and to adopt strategies to address the unequal power relations between women and men, promote the empowerment of women and ensure equal access to opportunities.

73. The CARICOM model Protection against Sexual Harassment Bill had led to the enactment of sexual harassment laws in Barbados and Belize. Guyana, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago had enacted anti-discrimination legislation that penalized sexual harassment in the workplace; Grenada had a law on cybercrime with provisions on child pornography and sexual harassment, and the Bahamas, Grenada and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines addressed sexual harassment in their laws on domestic violence. The countries that did not have sexual harassment or anti-discrimination legislation relied on common law.

74. CARICOM noted with interest the decision by the International Labour Organization to begin work on drafting a new international treaty to protect workers from harassment and violence. Addressing sexual harassment required a comprehensive approach that recognized the continuum of violence against women and girls and the different settings in which it occurred, with comprehensive laws and preventive measures to

shift social norms regarding gender. CARICOM supported the engagement of men and boys in efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual harassment.

75. In January 2017, CARICOM had signed a memorandum of understanding with UN-Women that would allow the collection of Caribbean-wide gender-related data on the implementation of the gender dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals. He expressed appreciation to the United Nations system for its continuing efforts to help the CARICOM countries promote the advancement of women.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/73/SR.8

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 5 October 2018, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Saikal ..... (Afghanistan)

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Agenda item 29: Advancement of women (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 29: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/73/38, A/73/263, A/73/266, A/73/285, A/73/294 and A/73/301)

1. **Ms. Scott** (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that women constituted the majority of poor people in Southern Africa. SADC was committed to eliminating all aspects of gender inequality, including economic disparities and violence against women. Its founding treaty recognized the vital importance of women in development, as did various regional legal and programmatic instruments observed by most of its members. It was committed to achieving the gender-related goals of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. To date, legal progress had been encouraging. Constitutions had been amended and legislative provisions adopted to ensure equal rights for women, including access to justice, representation in political and decision-making processes and access to education, health and employment. However, the region continued to face challenges with regard to early marriage, family laws, gender-based violence, trafficking in persons, communicable and non-communicable diseases and the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. SADC viewed partnerships as an essential complement to the efforts of its members, who remained committed to ensuring the full social and economic participation of women and girls.

3. **Mr. Prongthura** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that gender equality had been a priority of ASEAN since the adoption of the Declaration on the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region in 1988. Its strategies were guided by regional instruments, including the ASEAN Committee on Women Work Plan (2016–2020) and the ASEAN Declaration on the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals. In June 2018, it had held the Senior Officials Conference on Gender Mainstreaming in the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Sectoral Bodies.

4. As a result of its efforts, gender mainstreaming was more advanced, and the general public was more aware of the importance of gender equality. Furthermore, women's labour force participation had gradually risen to an average of between 60 and 70 per cent. Nevertheless, recognizing the potential of a more gender-inclusive workforce, ASEAN had adopted the Action Agenda on Mainstreaming Women's Economic Empowerment in ASEAN.

5. ASEAN was working closely with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on the implementation of its regional and international commitments. UN-Women had contributed to the launch of the regional HeForShe campaign and to the conclusion of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Following the adoption of the Joint Statement on Promoting women, Peace and Security in ASEAN in 2017, the first ASEAN-Australia Dialogue on Women, Peace and Security had been held in April 2018.

6. **Mr. Escalante Hasbún** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that the CELAC countries were firmly committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women. They undertook to eradicate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and to promote women's political and economic empowerment by eliminating social barriers and adopting and strengthening laws and policies on gender equality, access to education and justice, economic and financial independence and political participation. They acknowledged their international and regional commitments to strengthen their legal and political frameworks and to improve support for national mechanisms for the advancement of women.

7. The CELAC countries remained deeply concerned about the feminization of poverty and stressed the need to support national efforts to eradicate poverty in all its forms. They attached great importance to women's participation in politics and decision-making, as well as to the protection of migrant women and girls.

8. All States should have national policies and legal frameworks that promoted and protected the human rights of women and girls and ensured an effective response to violations of those rights, including all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination. They should promote the role of men and boys as agents of change for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

9. The CELAC countries would work to overcome the patriarchal cultural stereotypes that perpetuated the unequal distribution of labour, and they were committed to implementing policies and programmes to promote access to decent employment for all women, including those who faced multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. They recognized the contributions of older women, especially those who assumed responsibility for childcare, housework and farming in

the absence of other adults. They reaffirmed their commitment to enable women affected by natural disasters to be involved in the response as leaders and decision-makers on equal terms with men.

10. They recognized the important contribution of feminist organizations, women's movements and civil society to the inclusion of women's interests, needs and views in the international agenda. They also recognized the critical importance of rural women in sustainable rural development, as well as in in the prevention and resolution of armed conflict and peacebuilding. In February 2018, a regional consultation on the empowerment of rural women and girls, organized with the participation of UN-Women, had led to the Santiago Declaration, which would contribute to national efforts to ensure the economic empowerment of all women.

11. CELAC reiterated its firm support for UN-Women and welcomed the strengthening of its capacity. However, achieving gender equality and women's empowerment would require coordinated, coherent efforts throughout the United Nations development system, as well as greater international dialogue and consensus and increased international cooperation.

12. **Mr. Jürgenson** (Estonia), speaking on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries, said that every State had a responsibility to hold perpetrators of violence against woman or girls accountable. Given the range of problems that disproportionately affected women and girls, they urged improved gender mainstreaming in addition to targeted gender equality actions.

13. Access to affordable child care and parental insurance, including a more equal division of parental leave, were critical to closing the labour force participation gap and ensuring women's economic rights. Women and girls must be allowed to decide freely on all matters related to their sexual and reproductive health. In that connection, comprehensive sexuality education was key for improving public health and empowering women and girls. Moreover, integrating gender equality into the implementation of all sustainable development goals, with special attention to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, was a crucial component for progress.

14. With respect to empowering women in the digital age, it was necessary to develop information and communications technologies programmes that targeted women and girls. In addition, steps must be taken to address cyberbullying and online harassment.

15. The Nordic and Baltic countries stressed the importance of advancing the women, peace and security agenda and the need to end conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence immediately. They welcomed the growing emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment in the work of the United Nations and appreciated the Secretary-General's initiatives to combat sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse within the Organization.

16. **Ms. Wacker** (Observer for the European Union), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States; the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the European Union would continue to work towards gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls and their full enjoyment of all human rights. It remained the world's largest investor in gender equality through actions such as the multi-stakeholder Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies and the European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women. The Spotlight Initiative recently launched the Latin America Regional Programme, which would combat femicide through a combination of well-funded in-country interventions and regional activities.

17. The European Union had signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), and it was currently updating its policy framework with a view to full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. It valued the work of civil society organizations and their partners and recognized the key role of the United Nations in mainstreaming the equality and empowerment of women and girls and combating violence against them.

18. The European Union observer delegation was working with its partners to draft strong women-related resolutions during the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. It remained committed to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. In that connection, it reaffirmed its commitment to promote and protect the right of every individual to decide freely on matters related to his or her sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, and stressed the need for universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, sexuality education and quality, affordable health care. It remained fully committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Sustainable

Development Goal 5, and would continue to work closely with its partners to ensure that all rights were fully and equally enjoyed by all.

19. **Mr. Tanner** (Finland) said that women were at disproportionately high risk of violation of their right to life. More than [illegible] of female homicide victims were killed by family members or intimate partners, compared to just over 5 per cent for men. Homicide rates were particularly high for indigenous and disabled women and girls. Most of those deaths were preventable. To provide a better understanding of the magnitude of the problem, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions had called for States to cooperate on the collection of data on femicide.

20. Hate speech had increased in scale and intensity as a result of rapid global digitalization. It fed intimate partner violence and targeted feminist activists and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) women. Online hate speech should be curbed through more effective prevention, law enforcement and legislation. The tools for combating it could be found in existing international conventions.

21. In 2017, Finland had developed an action plan on violence against women through a participative process bringing together several ministries and civil society. The plan included investment in services for victims of violence and steps to improve data collection on femicide.

22. The international human rights conventions were the cornerstones of Finnish negotiations on sexual and reproductive health rights. Negotiators had lost touch with the realities of women and girls, and the hard compromises reached in Beijing and Cairo were being challenged and undermined. Finland was committed to the full realization of sexual and reproductive rights for women and girls around the world, and it was working to build alliances across regional divides for that purpose.

23. **Ms. Wagner** (Switzerland) said that, in Switzerland as elsewhere, the movements against sexual harassment and assault had reopened public debate on women's rights and social norms. Some cities, such as Lausanne, had already adopted measures to prevent and raise awareness about street harassment. Under a Swiss federal law, sexual harassment in the workplace was prohibited as a form of discrimination. However, a recent study of the law's effectiveness had found that around 80 per cent of cases were not decided in favour of the complainant. Noting that women were disproportionately targeted by online violence, she said that cyberbullying was a complex challenge that involved both cybercrime and the protection of the person and personal data. Switzerland would support the International Labour Organization in drafting a new international treaty to protect workers from harassment and violence and would implement the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which had entered into force in April 2018.

24. **Ms. Oehri** (Liechtenstein) said that, in early 2018, her Government had adopted a national implementation strategy for the 2030 Agenda. On the basis of a gap analysis, it had decided to prioritize eight Goals, including Goal 5 on gender equality.

25. Although women and girls were disproportionately affected by sexual and gender-based violence, men and boys made up the majority of victims in certain contexts. Sexual violence against men continued to be underreported owing to cultural taboos. It was important to pinpoint the factors underlying sexual and gender-based violence in order to develop effective, sustainable solutions for all.

26. Noting that women were particularly vulnerable to modern slavery and human trafficking, she said that Liechtenstein had increased its penalties for human trafficking. Internationally, it had spearheaded the Liechtenstein Initiative for a Financial Sector Commission on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

27. **Ms. Grignon** (Kenya) said that the 2010 Kenyan Constitution specifically guaranteed gender equality and women's empowerment and required the adoption of gender parity legislation. The President's new Big Four agenda focused on investing in food security, manufacturing, affordable health care and affordable housing, all key socioeconomic drivers for improving the lives of women, youth and children. In addition, Kenya had increased allocations to affirmative action funds targeting those groups. Thanks to free education and to specific programmes for vulnerable girls, school retention rates for girls had risen substantially. With the ultimate goal of universal health coverage, Kenya had boosted funding for free maternal and post-delivery health services and had built strategic partnerships with the private sector in order to improve quality and accessibility. It addressed gender-based violence through initiatives in five priority areas: prevention, protection, prosecution, programming and partnerships. In addition, it was conducting nationwide campaigns to change attitudes about such violence.

28. **Mr. Gonzalez** (Colombia) said that women were at risk of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, leading to their marginalization, poverty

and vulnerability. Women were key agents of the local and national economy, and their role in food security, the family, social cohesion and the transmission and preservation of the culture and protection of the environment must be recognized. Their full and effective participation was necessary to the realization of human rights.

29. His Government was working with national and regional authorities to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It had received invaluable assistance from UN-Women and gender expert Line Bareiro, as well as women's organizations. In its ongoing legal and institutional reforms, it was taking due account of the indispensable role of women in development and the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

30. **Ms. Koning-Hoeve** (Netherlands) said that, as the UN-Women representative for the Netherlands and a farmer herself, she knew many successful women in farming, but she had also met many other women farmers who faced inequality and poverty. She urged Member States to follow up on General Assembly resolution 72/148 on improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas and recommended focusing on five areas: enhancing the political and socioeconomic empowerment of rural women and supporting their full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels; providing support for women's and farmer's organizations and cooperatives; designing, revising and implementing laws to ensure that rural women were accorded full and equal rights to own land and other property; ensuring that all farmers could get a fair price for their products, and raising rural living conditions to urban standards.

31. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that the progress made since the Fourth World Conference on Women showed that gender inequalities could be reduced through political action. However, full equality and empowerment for women would be impossible in the absence of a just and equitable international order.

32. Cuba was proud of the progress it had made in the advancement of women. It had been the first country to sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Women were paid the same wages as men for equal work; they received paid maternity leave and disability and widows' pensions, and they could own land and take out loans. Over half of the members of the National Assembly were women. Women and girls had access to free education, which was vital for their empowerment and the eradication of prejudices, discrimination and violence. Sexual and reproductive rights, including the right to abortion and birth control, were guaranteed.

33. With regard to violence against women, the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States perpetrated economic violence against Cuban women. Cuba continued to call for the elimination of all unilateral coercive measures and would continue to develop its social model, based on justice, equality and solidarity, in strict compliance with the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

34. **Ms. Miyazaki** (Japan) said that, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, immediate collective action was needed to ensure gender equality and empower women. In 2018, Japan had continued to do its part through increased international cooperation and development assistance, such as its $50 million contribution to the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi). At the domestic level, it had enacted a law on promotion of gender equality in the political field and another aimed at reducing excessive working hours and ensuring fair working conditions.

35. Japan would spare no effort to support the work the newly elected Japanese member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It continued to promote the women, peace and security agenda through support for the empowerment of conflict-affected women and girls and for the improvement of judicial systems for preventing sexual violence in conflict. In March 2019, it would hold the fifth World Assembly for Women in Tokyo alongside the Women 20 summit.

36. **Mr. Habich** (Peru) said that the Peruvian Government was actively working to include a gender focus in all public policies and would adopt a national gender equality policy by year-end. Peru's national policy on gender-based violence for 2016–2021 reflected the need to change sociocultural patterns. Peru had a policy of equal pay for equal work, and it was promoting women's active participation in the economy. Almost all public institutions guaranteed parental leave and benefits, while slightly more than half prohibited sexual harassment and provided for at least one intervention to address gender gaps. With respect to political representation, the Government had committed to the implementation of mechanisms to ensure the election of women to public office. It had been decided that the national and regional Governments should establish gender equality mechanisms to improve the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national gender equality policies.

37. **Mr. Bin Momen** (Bangladesh) said that the advancement of women was of great importance to its woman Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, who had received the Global Women's Leadership Award in 2018. Bangladesh had 72 women parliamentarians, and the Speaker of the House, the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition were also women. Girls significantly outnumbered boys in secondary school, and there were 20 million women in the workforce. Women had easy access to microsaving schemes, and women entrepreneurs were offered collateral-free bank loans, start-up funds and industrial plots.

38. While all of its national plans and policies were gender-responsive, Bangladesh was also implementing a national women's development policy as well as action plans for preventing violence against women and children, ending child marriage, combating human trafficking and ensuring gender equity. In addition, it operated safety net programmes for marginalized and vulnerable women. As an extremely climate-vulnerable country, it had launched various disaster risk reduction initiatives that had significantly enhanced the resilience of women and girls in natural disasters. It was therefore not surprising that, for the third consecutive year, Bangladesh had ranked first in gender equality in Southeast Asia in the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index 2017.

39. Bangladesh was one of the world's largest exporters of workers, including many unskilled and semi-skilled female domestic servants who were often victims of sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation. His Government had hoped that the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration would address the issue in more concrete terms. Although it had taken steps to protect their rights, global efforts were needed to ensure adequate safeguards under existing international laws and treaties.

40. Having spearheaded the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, Bangladesh continued to work closely with the international community to further the role of women over the entire continuum of conflict. It had been the first to deploy female helicopter pilots in a peacekeeping mission, and it was increasing the number of Bangladeshi women peacekeepers.

41. **Mr. Chernenko** (Russian Federation) said that gender equality continued to be a relevant goal and required the active cooperation of all stakeholders. United Nations system bodies should take a balanced approach to gender issues, incorporating them into their work only where appropriate and relevant. His delegation reaffirmed its support for the Commission on the Status of Women as the primary intergovernmental forum for gender equality and the advancement of women. While it was generally pleased with the work of UN-Women, successful execution of its mandate hinged on close cooperation with the relevant United Nations entities and careful alignment of its operational activities with the overall political priorities of the Commission. It should provide assistance on the ground only at the request and with the permission of the State concerned.

42. While gender equality in the United Nations system was a desirable goal, candidate selection should not be based solely on gender but also on efficiency, competence, integrity and equitable geographical representation. In addition, steps should be taken to correct the gender imbalance in UN-Women, in keeping with the principle of involving more men in promoting women's empowerment and gender equality.

43. Under the plan of action to implement the first stage of its National Strategy for Women 2017–2022, the Russian Federation was implementing measures to protect women's health, improve their economic status, prevent and respond to violence against women and expand women's participation in political and public life. At the second Eurasian Women's Forum, held in Saint Petersburg in September 2018, the participants had decided that the next gathering would take place in 2021 and would be called the Global Women's Forum.

44. He encouraged all stakeholders to engage in a constructive and respectful exchange of views and positive experiences in the area of gender equality, with due consideration for the unique characteristics and traditions of the different Member States.

45. **Mr. Aziz** (Iraq) said that Iraq had had a personal status law since 1959, and its new citizenship law gave women the same rights as men. The electoral law had been amended to grant women the right to vote in parliamentary and local elections, while another law set a quota for women's participation in parliament. Iraq provided social protection for divorced, widowed and unmarried women and special protection and privileges for working women. It was preparing to adopt a law on domestic violence and was implementing strategies to combat violence against women and to promote their advancement. It had established a women's empowerment directorate and had launched microlending projects to empower rural women.

46. Following the defeat of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Iraq had extended aid to women survivors of horrendous human rights violations. Pursuant to the Joint Communiqué between the United

Nations and the Government of Iraq on Prevention and Response to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, it was working on an implementation plan with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. It particularly welcomed the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Iraqi activist Nadia Murad for her work to fight sexual violence as a weapon of war.

47. **Mr. Sisouk** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that, under the Lao Constitution and other laws, the State had a responsibility to ensure that women enjoyed the same legal rights and economic and social opportunities as men. In fulfilment of that responsibility, as well as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda, the Government had once again mainstreamed the empowerment and advancement of women into its five-year socioeconomic development plan, which it was implementing alongside the Vision for Development of Lao Women 2030, the Strategic Development Plan for Lao Women 2025 and the Lao Women's Development Plan (2020–2025). His country had laws on the development and protection of women; preventing and combating violence against women and children; combating trafficking in persons, and the family. One sign of progress was the increased presence of women in positions of responsibility. His country would be presenting its combined eighth and ninth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and was an active participant in the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

48. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) said that his Government was working to mainstream gender equality across all sectors, in close collaboration with national civil society organizations such as the National Union of Eritrean Women. In 2019, Eritrea would present its voluntary national review during the high-level political forum on sustainable development and would also present a periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

49. Eritrea had achieved gender parity in primary and middle school, but further effort was needed at the tertiary level. Women had equal land ownership rights under the law, and steps had been taken to ensure that they acquired land. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the new agreed conclusion of the Commission on the Status of Women on challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls.

50. **Mr. Nurudeen** (Nigeria) said that the Nigerian Government was unequivocally committed to the advancement of women's rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and was implementing programmes to ensure women-inclusive socioeconomic development. In keeping with its National Gender Policy, it had launched a variety of initiatives, including the Stop Violence Against Women in Election project, the Girls' Education Project and national awareness campaigns on violence against women and girls, female genital mutilation and child marriage. The Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme provided no-collateral, interest-free microloans to small entrepreneurs such as women's cooperatives and market women.

51. Nigeria had launched its second national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in May 2017. In July 2018, it had unveiled the Northeast Nigeria Road Map for the multi-stakeholder Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies.

52. **Ms. Mecea** (Romania) said that individual women were often pivotal in successful efforts to advance the status of women. Thus, empowering young women and girls was essential. Romania was raising awareness among adolescent boys and girls about gender equality and non-discrimination through games and sport, as well as through essay competitions and debates that encouraged both reflection and activism. Successful women had shared their experiences with school audiences, and school curriculums had been revised to include a gender perspective. Gender equality was central to the commitments made by the President of Romania, one of the first HeForShe IMPACT Champions, and it was reflected in the composition of the Romanian youth delegation.

53. **Ms. Mbana Makina** (Equatorial Guinea) said that the President of her country considered women to be agents of socioeconomic development, and the First Lady undertook personal initiatives to promote their economic, social and cultural development. The national development strategy included women's empowerment, and it was working to eliminate disparities in access to education and training as well as school retention rates. While women's labour force participation had risen, it was still low, and family policies would be developed to boost it. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Gender Equality provided training and technical support in business organization and management for women entrepreneurs and women's cooperatives; coordinated the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equity nationwide and oversaw the construction and repair of social protection centres. It had also prepared a practical guide on the creation, organization and management of women's groups and associations. In the

November 2017 elections, women had obtained 20 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 11 seats in the Senate.

54. **Mr. Tōnē** (Tonga) said that Tonga valued women's contribution to sustainable development and continued to pursue gender parity in leadership and decision-making positions. In the most recent general elections, two women had been elected to Parliament, and in 2018 the first woman had been appointed to the judiciary. Its gender policy aimed to give women equitable access to economic and employment opportunities.

55. Tonga appreciated the support received through the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development initiative, which had strengthened its efforts to promote the participation of women in political processes. It also appreciated the assistance provided by Australia and Sweden through the Pacific Community for the establishment of a legal aid centre which provided free legal assistance to survivors of domestic violence. He thanked the Governments of Australia, New Zealand and Sweden as well as UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for their continuing financial support for gender equality and the advancement of women in Tonga.

56. **Mr. Nugroho** (Indonesia) said that the President of Indonesia had committed to ending violence against women and girls as a HeForShe Champion. Indonesia's approach was comprehensive and holistic. In keeping with its national development plan, it was pursuing a strategy focused on raising awareness of the rights of women, capacity-building for the relevant institutions and multi-stakeholder cooperation. In the context of fostering a safe and secure environment for women, the Government was working with national universities to promote the Campus without Violence project, which had already reached more than 1,500 male high school and university students. To ensure access to justice for women victims of violence, Indonesia had established a system of integrated service centres, safe houses and specialized units in police stations and hospitals where women could report incidents safely and confidentially. Women victims were guaranteed due process of law and were treated in a gender-responsive manner. With respect to political participation, the percentage of women candidates in local elections had increased, and in 2018, 18 out of 101 women candidates for local office had been elected. Moreover, there were eight women ministers in the current Cabinet. Regarding harmful practices, Indonesia had banned female genital mutilation. The Government was working with women's and religious groups to raise awareness of its dangers and had developed advocacy tools, strategies and programmes.

57. **Ms. Abdelkawy** (Egypt) said that, in recent years, Egypt had worked hard to consolidate its legal framework on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Penal Code had been amended to criminalize sexual harassment and make female genital mutilation a felony, with increased penalties. The civil service law now gave working mothers four months' maternity leave instead of three; a new investment law treated men and women equally; and the inheritance law had been amended to impose stricter penalties for denying a woman's inheritance rights.

58. Regarding female genital mutilation, the Egyptian delegation contested some of the data in the report of the Secretary-General on intensifying global efforts for its elimination (A/73/266). Conclusions built on outdated, unverified data undermined the efforts of Member States and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and should be avoided in future reports.

59. Egyptian women now made up 15 per cent of parliament, 25 per cent of the ministers in the major ministries, and 49 per cent of local Government councillors. To combat gender stereotypes, Egypt had launched two media campaigns: one to empower women and the other to raise men's and boys' awareness of their role in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. In the context of eliminating violence against women, Al-Azhar University had published a manual on curbing violence against women from an Islamic perspective. In addition, eight shelters for women survivors of violence had been upgraded, and a hotline had been established for reporting incidents of violence against women.

60. Egypt supported the Secretary-General's strategy to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse across the United Nations system. It had been a member of the Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations since its inception, and it had recently signed the related voluntary compact with the Secretary-General.

61. **Ms. McDowell** (New Zealand) said that although New Zealand had been the first country to grant women the right to vote and had had three women prime ministers, it was still working to achieve full, substantive gender equality. The previous week, the Government had announced new legislation to make it easier for workers to make pay equity claims. Paid parental leave had been extended to 22 weeks in 2018 and would be extended to 26 weeks in 2020. The Government had also set up a programme to encourage women and girls to train and work in science, technology, engineering and math.

62. Her delegation shared the concerns expressed in the report of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice (A/HRC/38/46), which reasserted women's fundamental right to substantive equality and called for concerted efforts to counter rollbacks and the increasing attacks against the universality of women's human rights. Like the Working Group, it decried the false justifications often used to keep women from taking their rightful place in society and family as equals or from exercising full control over their bodies and personhood. It welcomed the Human Rights Council resolution on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights in humanitarian settings (A/HRC/RES/39/10), which stressed the need for accountability for the full range of violations of women's and girls' rights in such settings. The Council had sent a clear message that States must take responsibility for ensuring women's and girls' rights to effective remedy, including reparation, and for preventing the recurrence of such violations in humanitarian settings.

63. **Ms. Bhengu** (South Africa), recalling Nelson Mandela's dedication to the promotion of human rights, said that the centenary year of his birth was a fitting time to rededicate the United Nations to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities. Ending violence against women remained a top priority of the South African Government. It was currently reviewing the Programme of Action Addressing Violence Against Women and Children to ensure its efficacy. It was committed to fighting sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse and recognized the need to strengthen South African institutions and equip law officers through gender-based training, as well as for policies to prevent those forms of violence and the revictimization of the victims.

64. **Mr. de Souza Monteiro** (Brazil) said that the report of the intersessional expert meeting to consider gaps in, challenges to and best practices aimed at the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls and the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (A/HRC/39/34) would inform the discussions of the 2019 high-level political forum on sustainable development. Brazil was committed to eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence, domestic violence, trafficking in persons and femicide. It recognized the importance of engaging all stakeholders and the vital contribution of men and boys. More than 20 years after the Beijing Declaration, no country had achieved gender equality, and many were in danger of backsliding. He urged Member States to continue moving forward in the promotion and protection of the human rights of all women and girls.

65. **Ms. Almudayhim** (Saudi Arabia) said that her country's 2030 Vision recognized women as major drivers of growth and sought to remove all obstacles to their economic, political and social empowerment. Saudi Arabia was developing a national strategy on women with a view to launching integrated initiatives for their empowerment. Under Saudi laws, men and women working in the public sector were guaranteed equal pay for equal work and subject to the same regulations. The military and civil service retirement schemes did not discriminate against women.

66. Guided by Sharia law, Saudi Arabia had developed a multimillion-dollar plan to combat trafficking in women and girls, and the Permanent Committee on Combating Trafficking in Persons cooperated with government entities and civil society organizations to prosecute traffickers and provide shelter, psychological and legal services and training for the victims. Saudi law criminalized female genital mutilation and protected women from all forms of violence. Its justice mechanisms did not discriminate and offered women the support needed to ensure prosecution. In addition to establishing a system to combat harassment, Saudi Arabia had launched a project to provide support for battered women and had set up a committee to protect women in their homes. In that connection, the recently established Family Affairs Council encouraged strong families with strong religious values. Saudi Arabia was working not only to provide job opportunities for women but also to ensure that they held leadership positions. Women occupied top positions on the stock market and in chambers of commerce and served as members of parliament and diplomats.

67. **Mr. McElwain** (United States of America) said that the United States was a global leader in developing and implementing international programmes to combat trafficking in persons. Its annual Trafficking in Persons Report had prompted the adoption of legislation and national anti-trafficking action plans, programmes and policies around the world. Since 2001, the United States had funded more than 960 anti-trafficking projects totalling more than $300 billion in foreign assistance, including training for criminal justice practitioners in 20 countries. It had formed partnerships with almost 200 government and non-governmental organizations to strengthen relevant legal frameworks, enforcement actions, programmes and policies. It also worked with businesses, workers' organizations and trade associations to combat child labour and forced labour in

global supply chains. In October 2017, it had launched an inter-agency human trafficking project team that used innovative approaches, new technologies and dynamic partnerships to combat trafficking in persons.

68. **Ms. Pongor** (Hungary) said that domestic violence was a stand-alone offence in the new Hungarian Criminal Code. Victims and their children could seek refuge and services at Government-run crisis centres and halfway houses as well as non-governmental shelters. To combat the feminization of poverty, Hungary had established social protection policies and programmes, including postpartum support, three-year paid maternity leave, a generous family tax benefit, a family allowance for each child, housing subsidies and the forgiveness of student loans for women with two or more children. To encourage mothers to remain in or enter the work force, women could work part time until their child was three years old and remained eligible for home child care benefits even after going back to work, and companies received a contribution reduction for hiring women with young children. The Government had increased the number of nurseries and day-care facilities and offered entrepreneurial and skills training. To encourage women and girls to excel in science, research and innovation, the President had established a commission for women in research careers. In addition, the Association of Hungarian Women in Science was working to improve the situation of women researchers and shape public opinion.

69. **Mr. Mongelos Galeano** (Paraguay) said that, while the Paraguayan Constitution guaranteed equality between men and women, it had not been achieved in practice. The newly formed Government would take charge of implementing the national plan on equality of opportunities for women and men for 2018–2023, which aimed to promote equal opportunities for political and social participation, decent employment, education, comprehensive health care, a clean and healthy environment and freedom from violence. Paraguay had conditional cash transfer programmes for women heads of household. In addition, its Ciudad Mujer centres provided 80 interconnected and coordinated services exclusively for women and their children.

70. **Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) said that gender equality was one of the focuses of his country's first ever national action plan on human rights. To assist its efforts, UN-Women had recently opened an office in Argentina and was implementing a country programme. As President of the Group of 20, it would promote the mainstreaming of a gender-perspective across the forum's agenda with the help of the Business Women Leaders Task Force.

71. **Ms. Kipiani** (Georgia) said that, in the past 10 years, Georgia had introduced a number of legislative changes designed to foster gender equality, combat violence against women and promote women's role in decision-making. For example, political parties received additional funding if their candidate lists had at least 30 per cent women in each group of 10 names. In 2017, a commission had been established to prepare, coordinate and monitor national action plans on gender equality and violence against women and to promote gender mainstreaming. The new Human Rights Department monitored administrative and legal proceedings involving domestic violence, violence against women, discrimination and hate crimes and human trafficking. Georgia had conducted a number of awareness-raising campaigns on gender equality, as well as trainings for police officers, justice-sector officials and other government employees. It had also adopted national action plans on domestic violence, gender equality and implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

72. **Mr. Sor** (Singapore), noting the election of a woman as President of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, said that Singapore's election of its first women President also marked a milestone. As a meritocracy, Singapore was committed to gender equality. Women in Singapore enjoyed strong legal protection under its Constitution, the Penal Code, the Women's Charter and other laws. Almost all resident women were literate, and in 2017 over half of university graduates had been women. Women's labour force participation rate was now 80 per cent, and women had also made inroads in previously male-dominated professions. The Government worked with employers and unions to promote fair, responsible and merit-based employment practices. In 2017, Singapore had ranked twelfth out of 160 countries in the Gender Inequality Index.

73. In response to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, the Government had appointed women to top civil service positions. It had also established the Diversity Action Committee, which had set a target of 30 per cent women on corporate boards by 2020. The recently adopted Retirement and Re-employment Act enabled and encouraged older people to work beyond the age of retirement and would help to boost the adequate preparation for retirement of women.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/73/SR.9

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 8 October 2018, at 10 a.m.

Chair:	Mr. Saikal	(Afghanistan)
later:	Mr. Kováčik (Vice-Chair)	(Slovakia)
later:	Mr. Saikal (Chair)	(Afghanistan)

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Organization of work

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 29: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/73/38, A/73/263, A/73/266, A/73/285, A/73/294 and A/73/301)

1. **Ms. Lodhi** (Pakistan) said that the global commitment to advancing women's rights had created an environment in which women had greater opportunities and were more economically empowered. The meaningful participation of women in development activities was known to have a multiplier effect across the Sustainable Development Goals, from reducing poverty to improving public health and education standards.

2. Women had been active in Pakistani political and public life since the struggle for independence. Pakistan had elected the first woman Prime Minister in the Muslim world, and women had served as speakers of its national and provincial legislatures, as judges, as head of the Central Bank and as pilots and military officers. A party to many of the international instruments involving women's human rights, Pakistan had launched a national plan of action for women as a follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace. Women's empowerment was a priority of the new Government's ambitious agenda, and half of its parliamentary secretaries were women.

3. **Ms. Andújar** (Dominican Republic) said that her country's National Development Strategy 2030 mainstreamed gender equality across all policies, plans and projects. The Dominican Republic promoted gender equality through, inter alia, equal pay policies, technology training for women, paid parental leave and legal and policy frameworks for ending sexual harassment in the workplace. To boost opportunities for women, her Government was implementing the Gender Equality Seal for Public and Private Enterprises and had launched a web portal for women entrepreneurs. The Ministry of Women operated a health education centre for adolescents with comprehensive services including sexuality education and information on pregnancy prevention, as well as a 24-hour domestic violence hotline. Furthermore, Dominican schools were working to changes boys' attitudes about masculinity. In order to improve data and statistics on equality, the Dominican Republic had recently established a national gender equality observatory that would collect and analyse data on women's employment, education, health and other areas. In closing, she commended the Secretary-General for having achieved gender parity in United Nations leadership and welcomed the election of the fourth woman President of the General Assembly.

4. **Mr. Molina Linares** (Guatemala) said that his delegation welcomed the election of María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés as President of the General Assembly and looked forward to the upcoming Security Council open debate on women, peace and security, which demonstrated the high importance that Member States attached to that topic. On the basis of the recommendations contained in the 2017 concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/GTM/CO/8-9), Guatemala was working to improve women's access to justice and end impunity for offences against them, including femicide.

5. Noting his Government's attention to the technical aspects of its national strategy on women, he said that it faced daunting challenges for closing inequality and inequity gaps, especially in the case of rural women, many of whom were indigenous. Its public policy instruments included guidelines for strengthening women's capacities to participate in decision-making and politics. It was aware of the need to continue institutionalizing and harmonizing social protection policies, to develop and strengthen poverty reduction strategies and to develop policies for improving access to credit, technology, training and market information. In closing, he thanked the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for its continued assistance to government institutions and civil society.

6. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that his Government was committed to implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the international obligations of Nicaragua under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

7. Women played a central role in the changes taking place in Nicaragua. Their increasing prominence in positions of leadership was due to sustained efforts to achieve gender equality and to implement the Constitution of Nicaragua and international treaties. For example, as a result of a law requiring the political parties to include equal numbers of men and women on their candidate lists, more than half of government officials and municipal office-holders were women. In addition, women and their families enjoyed a higher quality of life thanks to the "faith, family and community" model, and reduced maternal mortality had been achieved through the improvement of health care for rural women. The progress made by Nicaragua in closing the gender gap had been recognized internationally, including by the World Economic Forum.

8. **Mr. Shakirov** (Kazakhstan) said that his country had advanced rapidly since its independence in 1991 because women were an essential element of all its national plans. All government actions aimed to ensure women's equal rights to economic resources, education and health care, including reproductive health care, as well as to nutrition, social services, and ownership and control of land and other forms of property, with special attention to disabled, rural and ethnic women. However, like all countries in transition, Kazakhstan had an implementation gap, which it was trying to close through a number of programmes and services.

9. Kazakhstan was gradually moving towards gender-sensitive strategies. It aimed to empower women through education, economic empowerment and appropriate laws. Talented young women received scholarships to study at the world's top universities, and women outnumbered men in domestic universities. Access to microcredit continued to boost the number of women entrepreneurs, and growing numbers of women had been elected to government, parliamentary and academic office. Women were being trained and employed in new information and communications technologies. Kazakhstan had also enacted legislation to prevent and remedy violence against women, sexual abuse, trafficking in women and modern forms of slavery.

10. **Ms. Dev** (India) said that her country was proud that the first woman elected President of the General Assembly had been from India. It attached the utmost importance to the representation of women in decision-making positions and was moving from women's development to women-led development by reserving seats for women in local government. Empowerment of women was at the core of national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Women were the largest direct beneficiaries of government programmes for poor families, and growing numbers of women had bank accounts, which gave them and their families access to loans, social security benefits and insurance. A campaign had been launched to promote the value of the girl child. Mandatory paid maternity leave had recently been extended to 22 weeks, and organizations with 50 or more employees were now required to have a crèche. To promote women's participation in the economy, 50 million women had received free cooking gas connections, and more girls' toilets were being installed in schools.

11. With respect to violence against women, Indian law criminalized all forms of violence against them, including sexual harassment, voyeurism and stalking and sexual harassment, and provided one stop centres and helplines for vulnerable and battered women. India also had legal safeguards against child marriage and domestic violence, and steps were being taken to reserve one third of police force positions for women. Indeed, India had been the first country to deploy an all-women police unit as part of a United Nations peacekeeping mission.

12. Her delegation commended the achievement of gender parity in United Nations senior management and fully supported the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation and abuse in the Organization. India would remain at the forefront of multilateral action for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

13. **Mr. García Paz y Miño** (Ecuador) said that his country had a strong legal framework on women's rights, including a Constitution that recognized gender equality. In February 2018, that framework had been further strengthened by the entry into force of an organic law on violence against women. Moreover, Ecuador had recently withdrawn all of its reservations to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. In keeping with the 2030 Agenda, his Government was implementing a national development plan that mainstreamed a gender perspective across its objectives, policies and guidelines and defined a coherent set of actions to improve the quality of women's lives in harmony with nature.

14. The Government of Ecuador was working to give women and men equal access to all levels of education and had incorporated a gender perspective in all public policies on health care. Its programmes to combat unemployment and underemployment addressed the reduction of pay gaps, and women were guaranteed parity with men under the organic law on electoral processes and political organizations. The Ecuadoran Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been the first in the region to adopt its own gender equality policy.

15. **Ms. Zappia** (Italy) said that, as the first woman Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations and a diplomat, she was committed to working with delegations to promote the advancement of women, which was an Italian international priority. Her delegation had taken an active part in negotiating the draft resolutions on child, early and forced marriage and on intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation. In 2018, to translate its policies into action, Italy had increased its core funding for UN-Women and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and had confirmed its contribution to the UNFPA-United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Accelerating Change.

16. Italy was a partner in the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies, and, during its tenure on the Security Council, had promoted the inclusion of specific provisions to prevent and counter sexual violence in the mandates of peacekeeping missions. It was a member of the Secretary-General's circle of leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations; had signed the related voluntary compact and was the top contributor to the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. In addition, it provided peacekeepers with a wide range of training modules, including one on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.

17. The protection, empowerment and emancipation of women were core priorities of Italian development cooperation, which emphasized their rights, access to education, transformative role and entrepreneurial ability. Italy had supported all the Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security and was promoting their implementation nationally and internationally.

18. **Ms. Zahir** (Maldives) said that, because of her country's egalitarian tradition, women had never experienced discrimination in school enrolment or employment and had always had the right to vote. They nevertheless faced significant challenges which Maldives was taking steps to address. The Employment Act guaranteed maternity leave and equal pay for equal work and prohibited the use of gender or marital status as a basis for terminating employment. The Gender Equality Act defined the responsibilities of the public sector, businesses, non-governmental organizations and other employers in regard to gender equality and non-discrimination against women and required the Government and political parties to ensure equal opportunities for women at all levels. For a number of years, the Government had required 30 per cent of seats on the boards of State-owned companies to be held be women. Maldives had strict laws to prevent violence against women and to protect victims of gender-based discrimination, and it had criminalized marital rape in 2014.

19. **Ms. Salim** (Afghanistan) said that an empowered and emboldened generation of women had emerged in Afghanistan. An all-girls robotics team had competed internationally in 2018, and almost 20 per cent of the candidates in the upcoming parliamentary election were women. Thanks to policies put in place since 2001, women represented more than a quarter of government employees. Her Government was continuing to promote the rights of women by fulfilling its global commitments on freedom from violence and access to education and health services, by implementing a national women's empowerment programme, by enforcing national laws on equal rights and protections and by advancing women in government and business.

20. A national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) was being implemented, as a result of which women were actively involved in shaping the future of the country. Women's contribution to the peace and security of Afghanistan was more important than ever and the proportion of women on the High Peace Council had risen from 11 to 20 per cent.

21. Efforts to combat violence against women included the appointment of a Deputy Attorney General for Elimination of Violence against Women, the development of a national strategy on violence against women and the adoption of a law criminalizing their harassment. The Government had also recently launched a rural development project that would improve the living conditions of widows and poor women.

22. **Ms. Shlein** (Israel) said that Israeli artist Netta Barzilai's winning Eurovision entry, "Toy", had amplified the worldwide outcry against sexual harassment and violence. At the 12th meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, held on 22 March 2017, Israel had introduced a draft resolution entitled "Preventing and eliminating sexual harassment in the workplace" (E/CN.6/2017/L.4) and had subsequently spearheaded the establishment of the Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment.

23. Israel worked to promote women's rights and empowerment through bilateral and multilateral partnerships in various countries. Its cooperation and development agency offered courses for governmental and non-governmental organizations on providing support for women entrepreneurs. It also organized the International Women Leaders Conference.

24. **Ms. López Marcocchio** (Mexico), speaking as a youth delegate, said that women's advancement was impeded by structural barriers the world over. Her country's recent legislative elections, in which women had attained gender parity, demonstrated the effectiveness of proactive investment and affirmative action. In Mexico, more and more women were entering the armed forces, public security services and, more recently, United Nations peacekeeping operations. Moreover, recent legal reforms would lead to true structural and cultural change. Mexico had learned from other countries and successful programmes, and it had also shared its good practices.

25. At the multilateral level, Mexico recognized migrant women as agents of change in their countries of origin and destination, and it had sponsored the draft Human Rights Council resolution on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (A/HRC/38/L.1/Rev.1) which, inter alia, urged States to ensure women's bodily autonomy and right to decide freely on all matters relating to sexual and reproductive health. Her Government was also continuing its efforts to promote the agreed conclusions of the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, particularly with respect to women's access to justice; the importance of the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders; and the importance of technology for rural women.

26. Mexico was concerned about the polarization of multilateral forums, which resulted in stagnation. In particular, it condemned the attacks on gender equality within the Third Committee. Mexico would continue to advocate for the right to reproductive and sexual health as an essential element of empowerment. Regarding the current session's focus on intersecting forms of discrimination, it was important to recognize all women's organizations and to enlist the support of men and boys.

27. Through its Global Centre of Excellence in Gender Statistics, established in cooperation with UN-Women, Mexico would continue working with the United Nations system and regional mechanisms to improve statistical systems and generate data and statistics to inform gender equality policies. She urged Member States to join forces on Sustainable Development Goal 5 because, according to current statistical trends, it would not be attained without more progressive multilateral action.

28. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Turkey) said that the Turkish Constitution recognized women and men as equal and had been amended to introduce the concept of positive discrimination for vulnerable groups such as women, children and persons with disabilities. Her Government remained committed to improving the living standards of women and girls and ensuring their full and equal participation in all spheres of life. It focused on preventing all forms of discrimination against them, combating violence against them and ensuring their empowerment. In March 2018, the Government had adopted a strategy paper and action plan on women's empowerment for the period 2018–2023, which would be implemented in cooperation with civil society, universities and the private sector.

29. Turkey saw UN-Women as a key institution and essential partner and was pleased to host its Europe and Central Asia Regional Office. It attached particular importance to progress on implementing the women, peace and security agenda as host to 4 million displaced persons. It was continuing to meet their humanitarian, education and health needs and to take robust measures to prevent trafficking in refugee women and girls, who had an important role to play in their countries' futures.

30. **Ms. Turner** (Jamaica) said that, as a member of the Group of Champions of Women's Economic Empowerment, Jamaica remained committed to gender equality, women's empowerment and compliance with the gender-related international instruments. In recognition of the ongoing need to strengthen its legislative and policy frameworks on violence against women and girls, her Government was currently reviewing its laws on domestic violence. It was also implementing an action plan to eliminate gender-based violence and had recently signed a memorandum of understanding with UN-Women for its funding. Her delegation was grateful to UN-Women and its other partners for their support and assistance.

31. To strengthen gender mainstreaming, Jamaica had established gender focal points across ministries, departments and agencies. In addition, 29 ministries, departments and agencies had received the gender equality certification seal for promoting gender equality in the workplace. The Government was working assiduously to begin consideration of a bill on sexual harassment.

32. **Monsignor Gręsa** (Observer for the Holy See) said that Pope Francis had called human trafficking a crime against humanity and had urged action to combat it, including addressing the demand for sexual services. Catholic sisters around the world were helping to combat human trafficking through the Talitha Kum network and through investment in education and employment for women and girls. The Holy See condemned not only violence against women in all of its forms but also the harmful stereotypes that justified and promoted discrimination against them. In view of the catastrophic effects of domestic violence, it urged States to use every possible legal instrument to prevent it and to promote a culture of non-violence. The Pope had also condemned the "throwaway culture", which discarded babies and the elderly as troublesome or useless. Lastly, to build a bright tomorrow, ways must be found to acknowledge and support the many women who sustained and transformed families and communities.

33. **Mr. Shi** Yuefeng (China) said that uneven development was a major obstacle to the advancement

of women. Women's rights and interests should be promoted holistically, by working to eradicate poverty and encourage overall economic and social progress, and by ensuring that women and girls shared fully and equally in the fruits of development.

34. In accordance with the concepts of win-win cooperation and a community with a shared future, the developed countries should fulfil the commitments made at the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in September 2015. They should also boost financial and technical assistance to developing countries, including capacity-building, and should step up their response to shared challenges that impeded women's development, such as climate change and the refugee and immigrant crisis.

35. All countries should adopt comprehensive measures to end violence against women. They should foster inclusive cultures, dispel and discourage anachronistic ideas and customs, and end discrimination against women. They should improve policies and legislation, strengthen monitoring and crack down on trafficking in women and girls, sexual harassment and sexual violence, and they should respond effectively to new challenges such as the misuse of the Internet and social media.

36. China had implemented national plans and programmes for women's development, had established a national mechanism to coordinate work on women and children and had adopted over 100 laws and regulations to protect women's rights. In 2016, women had accounted for 43 per cent of the national workforce and more than half of university students. Hospitalized delivery was almost universal.

37. With respect to international cooperation, China was delivering on its commitments at the Global Leaders' Meeting. In addition, it had recently hosted the second China-Arab Women's Forum and a workshop for women officials from Eastern Europe in order to deepen cooperation with women in the countries concerned. It would continue to support the work of UN-Women and other agencies, to strengthen exchanges and cooperation with other countries and to do its utmost to help developing countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

38. **Ms. Kalamwina** (Zambia) said that her country's Gender Equity and Equality Act of 2015 aimed to promote gender equity and equality as a cross-cutting issue. In addition to the Women's Development Programme, which provided microcredit to vulnerable women, Zambia was currently implementing the Girls' Education, Women's Empowerment and Livelihood Project, which had already helped 15,000 extremely poor girls to pay their secondary school fees and had provided productive grants and business training for 22,000 women. Another initiative, the Agricultural Development through Value Chain Enhancement Project, would improve the livelihoods of rural women and young people.

39. Zambia promoted girls' access to education by requiring schools to enrol an equal number of girls and boys at entry level, implementing a re-entry policy and building primary and secondary schools. While gender parity had improved, girls continued to face numerous barriers, many of which were financial. In response to the number of girls dropping out at the onset of menstruation, the Government had begun distributing free sanitary towels to girls in rural and peri-urban areas.

40. **Ms. Feldman** (Australia) said that gender equality was a core Australian value. While welcoming the progress made towards gender parity in the Secretariat, she urged all United Nations agencies to deliver on their commitment to the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The recently revealed instances of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment within the United Nations system were reprehensible. She welcomed the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance position and urged him to lead the reform of the culture underlying such unacceptable behaviours.

41. Ending violence against women and girls required coordinated, multisectoral approaches and attitudinal changes. National actions were channelled through the Government's National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022, while its international efforts included contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women. Women's control over their bodies was a prerequisite for full equality and Australia had a long-standing commitment to the promotion and delivery of sexual and reproductive health services.

42. **Ms. Ershadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the advancement of women was a global concern that required a global response. In recent years, violent extremism and terrorism had caused women and girls unimaginable suffering, and illegal unilateral sanctions, such as those imposed on her country, continued to violate the human rights of innocent citizens, with a particularly severe impact on women, children and other vulnerable groups.

43. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, girls' primary school enrolment was nearly universal, and the number of women university students continued to grow. In that connection, she wished to pay tribute to the late Maryam

Mirzakhani, the Iranian mathematician who became the first woman awarded the Fields Medal.

44. More and more positions in the executive, judiciary and legislative branches were held by women, and by the end of the sixth national development plan, at least 30 per cent of managerial positions in the public sector should be allocated to them. To provide additional legal protections, her Government was preparing a comprehensive bill on the protection of women against violence which it would soon submit to parliament. In March 2018, Iran had organized the International Event on Women, Sustainable Peace and Security in order to promote the women, peace and security agenda.

45. *Mr. Kováčik (Slovakia) took the Chair.*

46. **Mr. Bastida Peydro** (Spain) said that his country considered gender equality a domestic and international priority. At home, Spain had its first women-majority Cabinet. Its commitment to gender equality was reflected in instruments such as its 2007 Gender Equality Act and the State Pact against Gender-based Violence. Work was under way on the Strategic Plan for Equal Opportunities 2018–2020, which targeted sexual exploitation and the wage gap while also promoting the training and employment of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Spain would continue to promote women's equal participation and leadership in political, economic, social and cultural life, both at home and abroad.

47. Internationally, Spain had assumed leadership on the women, peace and security agenda. After spearheading the adoption of Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) on improving implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, it had helped to launch the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network and had co-chaired the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security. It had also been one of the main sponsors of Security Council resolution 2331 (2016) on trafficking in persons in the context of armed conflict.

48. With respect to international efforts to combat violence against women, Spain was a partner in the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies, supported UN-Women projects to strengthen the response to sexual violence and had contributed to the Special Appeal on Sexual Violence of the International Committee of the Red Cross. It had also actively supported the Spotlight Initiative. Spain would continue to work within the United Nations system to protect and strengthen international agreements and commitments on the human rights of women and girls and to support all efforts to fight discrimination against them.

49. **Ms. Ellertsdottir** (Iceland) said that her country had first-hand experience of the immense potential of gender equality and would continue its advocacy for women's human rights during its tenure on the Human Rights Council. Achieving gender equality by 2030 would require the support of men, especially those with the power to influence change. In fulfilment of his commitment as a HeForShe IMPACT Champion, the President of Iceland had helped to launch the Barbershop initiative, which encouraged men to assume leadership in the fight for gender equality.

50. Although Iceland consistently had the best score on the Global Gender Gap Index and the Women, Peace and Security Index, it was still working to achieve true gender equality. Most recently, it had enacted a law requiring employers to obtain equal pay certification in accordance with an equal pay standard based on International Organization for Standardization standards. It hoped to eliminate the gender pay gap by 2022.

51. **Mr. Gertze** (Namibia) said that, while women's rights were recognized in his country's Constitution and laws, achieving gender equality required buy-in and political will. By voluntarily adopting the 50-50 rule, the nation's political parties had made it possible to achieve gender parity in Parliament. In 2018, Namibia had hosted the fourth session of the Rural Women's Parliament, which aimed to foster understanding of parliamentary processes and empower rural women. Since spearheading the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), Namibia had increased the representation of women in its armed forces, police force and correctional services, making it a regional leader in that area. To promote women's economic empowerment, it had recently launched the Acceleration of Women-Owned-Enterprise Programme. Namibia was still plagued by gender-based violence and recognized the need for changes in its social norms.

52. **Mr. Ri** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that women in his country participated actively political and public life on an equal footing with men. Their rights were protected by law, and great strides had been made in improving women's health, work environment and living conditions. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea cooperated closely with the international organizations that promoted women's rights and health and had presented its combined second to fourth periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in November 2017. It would continue to strive towards gender equality and women's empowerment and to strengthen international cooperation and exchange in that area.

53. Recalling that Japan continued to refuse to accept legal responsibility for the sexual enslavement of more than 200,000 Korean women during the Second World War, he called on that country to recognize its past crimes against humanity officially, apologize for them and provide sincere compensation.

54. He also called for the immediate repatriation of the 12 women abducted from the Democratic Republic of Korea by the Republic of Korea, including Ms. Kim Ryon Hui, and for publication of the investigation results, in the spirit of the Panmunjom Declaration on Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula and the Pyongyang Joint Declaration of September 2018.

55. **Mr. Park** Chull-Joo (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in the United Nations system and would continue to support efforts to enhance institutional responses. The Republic of Korea was implementing its second plan for gender equality policies, which focused on promoting gender equality awareness, closing gender gaps in the workplace and ending violence against women. It was also implementing a plan to improve women's representation in the public sector, which had resulted in a steady growth in the number of women in public employment and increased support for women who had interrupted their careers.

56. Mindful of the painful experience of the Korean "comfort women", the Republic of Korea had recently launched the Action with Women and Peace initiative, which would roll out development cooperation projects to address the needs of women and girls who had survived sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, in close cooperation with UNICEF and UNFPA. It also planned to hold an annual international conference devoted to the women, peace and security agenda.

57. **Ms. Myint** (Myanmar) said that her country was implementing a national strategic plan for the advancement of women and working with women's organizations to strengthen the role of women in society. Since 2012, the Government had been implementing a World Bank rural development project that benefited the country's many rural women. To leverage technology to empower women, it had launched the iWoman and SMART Myanmar mobile phone apps. The Government had also recently submitted a law on violence against women to parliament, and it had been conducting awareness-raising workshops on gender-based violence across the country.

58. Myanmar cooperated actively with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Committee on Women and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, as well as with the relevant United Nations agencies. In addition, her Government had established an independent commission of enquiry to investigate all violations of human rights committed in Rakhine State since the terrorist attack by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army in October 2016, including sexual violence. In that connection, it was currently involved in coordinating a joint communiqué with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

59. Trafficking in persons, particularly women and girls, was of special concern to Myanmar, which was working closely alongside the relevant United Nations agencies and regional and international partners to combat that scourge. The Anti Trafficking in Persons Law of 2015 was being reviewed and amended to meet current challenges, and the Government was implementing its third five-year plan against human trafficking and people smuggling. It also operated reintegration and rehabilitation programmes for trafficked persons.

60. *Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan) resumed the Chair.*

61. **Mr. Panayotov** (Bulgaria) said that his country had identified gender equality as a priority of its candidature for membership of the Human Rights Council. In its own domestic polices, his Government paid special attention to improving women's participation in the labour market, reducing the gender-based differences in wages and income, fostering gender equality in decision-making processes and changing gender stereotypes. It actively promoted women's empowerment through education and was implementing numerous strategies and plans to encourage their participation in leadership, including targeted funding and measures to ensure equal treatment and equal pay for equal work. In its *Gender Gap Report 2017*, the World Economic Forum had ranked Bulgaria eighteenth among the 144 countries benchmarked.

62. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan) said that the Sudanese Constitution guaranteed gender equality in public life. Women in the Sudan enjoyed equal pay for equal work as well as all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. The Sudan had strengthened its legislation on violence against women, adopted a national strategy to eradicate gender-based violence, and had created a specialized unit to combat violence against women and girls and a police unit for the protection of families and children. It was also creating

a database on violence against women to enhance national efforts to combat that phenomenon.

63. The Sudan had adopted a law in 2014 to combat trafficking in persons, particularly women and girls, and the Government had conducted a national awareness-raising campaign to eliminate female genital mutilation, which had successfully reduced the prevalence of that practice in all parts of the country. It had also established a unit within the North Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission to support women in areas affected by conflict. Furthermore, in collaboration with relevant United Nations agencies, the Sudan Advisory Council for Human Rights in Darfur was seeking to combat early marriage, sexual violence and sexual harassment in that region and was promoting implementation of the World Health Organization guidelines for medico-legal care for victims of sexual violence. To that end, specialized training was being provided to medical personnel to help them provide appropriate assistance to victims of sexual violence. Courses on violence against women had also been held for police officers and military personnel.

64. Migration, poverty, armed conflict and certain traditional practices continued to impede the advancement of women in the Sudan and it was critical that, when drawing up plans and strategies to support Sudanese women and girls, international stakeholders adopted a comprehensive approach that took all those issues into consideration. The Sudan would continue its constructive engagement with the international community, relevant United Nations agencies and the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, who had visited the country in February 2018, to further strengthen its efforts to combat violence against women and girls and ensure that their rights were fully upheld.

65. **Ms. Nguyen** Lien Huong (Viet Nam) said that Viet Nam was committed to promoting women's participation in politics, government and economic and social development at the national, regional and international levels. Domestically, it was implementing a national action programme on gender equality for the period 2016–2020, and it had recently launched a scheme to support women's business start-ups. Furthermore, since 2016, it had organized an annual action month on promoting gender equality and preventing violence against women and girls from 15 November to 15 December. She was grateful to the United Nations for its cooperation and support in implementing the One Strategic Plan 2017–2021, which gave priority to addressing all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

66. In 2017, Viet Nam had chaired the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Women and the Economy Forum, which had endorsed gender inclusion guidelines for APEC. It was working closely with the other member States to mainstream gender across all ASEAN plans and programmes.

67. **Mr. Sakufi-Rumongi** (Rwanda) said that gender equality and women's empowerment had been a cornerstone of national reconstruction efforts following the 1994 genocide. Having more women in public decision-making was likely to lead to policies that benefited women, children and families in general. Thus, Rwanda fully supported the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity, which should make the United Nations more relevant and effective.

68. Owing to efforts to encourage women's participation in government, women represented 60 per cent of the Rwandan Chamber of Deputies, 45 per cent of the Cabinet and almost half of the Supreme Court. Rwanda had made significant efforts with respect to violence against women, including the establishment of one-stop centres that provided comprehensive 24-hour assistance to victims of gender-based violence. In addition, the capital city, Kigali, was a partner in the UN-Women Safe Cities programme.

69. His Government had revised the legal framework to combat trafficking in women and girls and had increased law enforcement training. Law enforcement agencies had also stepped up efforts to address human trafficking, including by increasing bilateral and multilateral ties with other law enforcement agencies, and an anti-human trafficking directorate had been established to coordinate locating and rescuing victims. Additionally, social service programmes had been instituted to identify and assist women and children at risk of trafficking. However, Rwanda continued to face challenges, which included women's limited skills and employability due to gendered roles and responsibilities, which the Government was committed to addressing.

70. **Ms. Badjie** (Gambia) said that her Government had stepped up its investment in empowering women in agriculture and the informal sector, with a particular focus on capacity-building for women entrepreneurs. In view of women's limited access to credit, a women's entrepreneurship fund would be established to provide microfinance and other forms of credit. Women and girls were the main beneficiaries of social protection interventions, which included cash transfers for poor pregnant women, family strengthening programmes and disability and health-care services. The Gambia continued to face high rates of child, early and forced

marriage as well as violence against women, including female genital mutilation, which had been banned in 2015 and was punishable by a heavy fine and up to three years in prison.

71. Implementation of the National Gender Policy 2010–2020 had led to the mainstreaming of gender as a development priority, improved health-care delivery, increased participation in decision-making and reduced gender stereotyping and discrimination. The Government continued to enforce the Women's Act, which, inter alia, protected the right of women and girls to a quality education, and remained committed to aligning domestic policy with international obligations on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

72. **Ms. Elmansouri** (Tunisia) said that the emancipation of Tunisian women had begun in 1956 with the promulgation of the Personal Status Code. Their rights had been strengthened in 2014 by the new Constitution, which enshrined the principle of gender equality, and by the withdrawal of Tunisian reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In 2017, Tunisia had enacted a ground-breaking law on violence against women that prohibited physical, economic and psychological abuse. Since then, various measures had been taken to implement it, such as establishing shelters for victims, setting up special investigation units and teaching human rights and gender equality in schools. Furthermore, seven United Nations agencies and eight ministries were currently working on a joint programme to aid women victims of violence. Tunisia had recently established the Peer Council for Equality and had adopted a national plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

73. However, despite all of the above, Tunisian women continued to experience violence and discrimination, particularly in poor and rural areas. In response, the President had established a commission tasked with recommending reforms linked to individual freedoms and equality, with a view to ensuring equality for all, regardless of origin, religion, gender or gender-orientation. The commission had issued a report that was being evaluated by all stakeholders.

74. **Mr. Arbeiter** (Canada) said that his country had not achieved gender equality and was focusing on the areas where it fell short, such as equal pay for equal work and equal opportunities for indigenous women and girls. During the seventy-third session, the Committee could strengthen its work to combat child, early and forced marriage by focusing on already married girls and the kinds of support they needed, and it could begin to tackle online discrimination and violence against women by recognizing it as hate speech. With respect to the General Assembly resolutions on women, peace and security, the challenge was to ensure their implementation. The Committee had made important progress on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and Canada would continue to work with other Member States, United Nations agencies and civil society on that priority issue.

75. **Ms. Quiel Murcia** (Panama) said that while the movements against femicide and sexual harassment and abuse had built needed support for modern legislation and institutional changes, it was important to continue to listen to the voices of all women. The approach of Panama to the advancement of women was based on economic independence and empowerment, prevention and care for teenage pregnancies, and strengthening gender-related institutions. With respect to economic independence and empowerment, her Government had two programmes to promote women's economic independence and empowerment: one targeting food security and farming and the other providing training for women entrepreneurs. In addition, Panama had established a quota for women on corporate and public-sector boards, supported the Equal Pay International Coalition and was implementing the Gender Equality Seal.

76. Panama was working to combat human trafficking through interinstitutional coordination mechanisms and awareness-raising campaigns. It was also committed to eradicating female genital mutilation.

77. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Israeli occupation remained the major obstacle to the advancement of Palestinian women. Five decades of violence and death had inflicted irreparable emotional damage. In six months alone, since the beginning of the Great March of Return, 180 Palestinian men, women and children had been killed and more than 17,000 had been injured.

78. Furthermore, the occupation had left Palestinian women economically disempowered. It also compromised the education of Palestinian girls, who were harassed by Israeli forces and kept from school at military checkpoints. In 2017, the schooling of almost 30,000 children had been interrupted by attacks or the threat of attacks on schools, and Israeli bombardments combined with dramatically increased settler violence had caused many parents to keep their daughters at home.

79. However, Palestinian women had shown great strength and resilience. Long active in peaceful protest,

they had participated in the Great March of Return on a scale not previously seen. They had also started non-governmental organizations, business associations and legal and counselling services to support one another in resisting the gender-specific effects of the occupation and to militate for gender equality, economic empowerment and freedom from discrimination. However, while they were working to claim their rights like women everywhere, their challenges continued to be exacerbated and entrenched by the occupation.

80. Her delegation once again called on the international community to hold Israel accountable for its flagrant violations of international law, to provide the Palestinian people with immediate international protection and to take the necessary steps to bring the half-century of occupation by Israel to an end.

81. **Ms. Bellout** (Algeria) said that the protection and promotion of women was a key objective for her Government, which had acceded to numerous international instruments on human rights and the rights of women. The principle of equality among citizens in terms of their rights and duties was enshrined in the Algerian Constitution, and all forms of discrimination, including on the basis of gender, were prohibited under Algerian law.

82. Without the participation of women in efforts to promote sustainable development, it would prove impossible for States to achieve any tangible progress in that area. Algeria strongly believed in the principle of equal pay for equal work and had launched numerous initiatives to promote the participation of women in national development, including a productive family scheme, a rural family scheme and a microcredit scheme that had provided microloans to over 60 per cent of women in the country. Women in Algeria comprised an increasing proportion of the national labour force, and over 50 per cent of the judiciary and of those employed in the education and health sectors. Furthermore, the authorities were obliged to promote gender parity when appointing staff to senior management positions at all public institutions.

83. To safeguard women, their property and their financial resources, all forms of violence against them, including domestic violence, sexual and verbal abuse and psychological and economic coercion or violence were prohibited under the Criminal Code. The penalties for familial neglect and sexual harassment in public places had been strengthened and a national fund established to provide support to divorced women with small children. Algeria also awarded a prize every year on 25 November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to associations and individuals that had made a particularly significant contribution towards ending all violence against women and girls.

84. **Mr. Onanga Ndjila** (Gabon) said that his country was a party to almost all instruments intended to improve gender equality and had made advancing the status of women a national priority. In 2007, the Government had established the Ministry of the Family and the Observatory for Women's Rights and Parity, and, in 2010, it had instituted a social protection and mandatory health insurance scheme. Since the beginning of the Gabonese Women's Decade in 2015, Parliament had passed a law establishing a 30 per cent quota for women and young candidates in parliamentary elections. At the international level, Gabon had sponsored General Assembly resolution 65/189 establishing International Widow's Day.

Organization of work

85. **The Chair** recalled that, on 2 October 2018, at the first meeting of the Committee, the delegation of Burundi had proposed that a legal opinion be sought regarding the legal basis for the inclusion of the Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi in the Committee's list of special procedure mandate holders authorized to report to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session; and the legal basis for the Commission's dialogue with the Committee in view of paragraph 22 of Human Rights Council resolution 39/14 of 28 September 2018. The Secretary of the Committee had advised that only the Committee could request such an opinion. The Committee had subsequently deferred its decision to extend invitations to the Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi and to the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia. On 4 October 2018, the Permanent Mission of Burundi had transmitted to the Chair of the Committee the text of its request for a legal opinion, which had subsequently been circulated to delegations on 5 October 2018.

86. **Mr. Charwath** (Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that Human Rights Council resolution 36/19 requested the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi to present the final report during an interactive dialogue at the seventy-third session of the General Assembly; Human Rights Council resolution 39/14 did not nullify that request. The Committee could not pick and choose which requests to respect and which to set aside. While the European Union and its member States would not formally object to the request for a legal opinion, they regretted that it would further delay the invitation and therefore requested that the opinion be delivered as expeditiously as possible.

87. **Ms. Abdelkawy** (Egypt), supported by **Mr. Abdahhak** (Syrian Arab Republic), said that any formal request from a Member State to the Secretariat for a legal opinion or for further information should be respected and processed as soon as it was received, without the need for Committee approval or consideration. It was the prerogative and duty of the Chair to guarantee that requests and concerns expressed by Member States were addressed, and the Secretariat must provide the necessary information before consideration of the matter in the Committee. Failure to do so could be perceived as infringing on the right of Member States to request information or clarification from the Secretariat. The Chair should therefore forward the request immediately to the Office of Legal Affairs.

88. **Mr. Sparber** (Liechtenstein), speaking also on behalf of Australia, Canada, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland, said that although all Member States had the right to seek a legal opinion from the Office of Legal Affairs, there was no need for a formal request in the situation at hand. There was no legal reason why the Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi should be excluded from the interactive dialogues with the Committee. The Secretary had explained the legal basis for the selected list of special procedure mandate holders and other experts scheduled to make presentations to the Third Committee at the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. Their respective delegations appreciated the interactive discussions with the mandate holders and saw no reason for questioning that practice.

89. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) said that her delegation wished to know why the interactive dialogue with the Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi had not been included in the initial list of mandate holders. She asked whether there was a clear rule that obliged the Committee as a whole to approve the sending of a request for a legal opinion, and whether a country had the right to do so individually.

90. **Ms. Korac** (United States of America) said that her delegation did not believe there was a basis for seeking a legal opinion, particularly by one Member State. According to the rules of procedure, any legal opinion must be sought by the Committee as a whole and not by a single Member State from the floor of the Committee.

91. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) said that, at the current time, the Committee only needed to discuss the text before it, as the issue of the request had already been discussed at a previous meeting. Given that the legitimate right of Burundi to request a legal opinion had been settled, the request should be sent and all delegations must abide by the opinion delivered.

92. **Mr. Kashaev** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation fully supported the request of Burundi, as States had the right to request an opinion from the Office of Legal Affairs. Given the various interpretations of the relevant Human Rights Council resolution, clarification should be sought.

93. **Mr. Castillo Santana** (Cuba) said that his delegation supported the request of the delegation of Burundi. Firstly, there should be no confusion between a request made to the International Court of Justice, which required plenary approval, and a request for a legal opinion from the Office of Legal Affairs. Burundi had every right to make such a request without the intervention of other delegations and it was the responsibility of the Secretariat to carry out that request.

94. **Mr. Shi** Yuefeng (China) said that his delegation believed that Burundi was entitled to request a legal opinion from the Office of Legal Affairs.

95. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) said that any Member State could request a legal opinion, but the decision to transmit that request to the Office of the Legal Counsel must be undertaken the Committee or another intergovernmental body. Any request for a legal opinion from a United Nations intergovernmental body must be the result of a decision, not necessarily by consensus, by the requesting body. He disagreed with the assertions of certain delegations that it was the prerogative of any Member State to request a legal opinion. While it was true that any delegation could send a request, that request would only have effect if the relevant intergovernmental body had agreed thereto, either through consensus or pursuant to a vote.

96. **Ms. Korac** (United States of America) asked whether the decision to request a legal opinion would be unanimously adopted if her delegation did not request a recorded vote.

97. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) said that absent a formal request for a vote, he presumed that the Committee would adopt the motion by consensus.

98. **Ms. Korac** (United States of America) said that, in that case, her delegation wished to request a vote on the decision to request a legal opinion.

99. **Mr. Khashaan** (Saudi Arabia) said that his delegation supported the request made by Burundi. The Committee should seize the opportunity to enhance cooperation on human rights issues and implement the principle of transparency.

100. **Ms. Abdelkawy** (Egypt), supported by **Mr. Castillo Santana** (Cuba), said that the proposal to put the matter to a vote would set a bad precedent.

101. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) said that his delegation did not understand how delegations that claimed to support the rule of law could seek to prevent another delegation from exercising its legitimate right to request a legal opinion. If the Committee did not wish to create a dangerous precedent, it should allow the request for a legal opinion to proceed.

102. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the fact that there had been very few instances in which United Nations intergovernmental bodies had requested a legal opinion was in and of itself significant. While such requests had been made in the past, for example by the Fifth Committee at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the Third Committee had never done so before and therefore a precedent would in fact be created if it decided to seek a legal opinion. In view of the late hour, his recommendation would be to proceed with the requested vote.

103. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi), supported by **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco), **Ms. Abdelkawy** (Egypt) and **Mr. Castillo Santana** (Cuba), said that a vote should not be taken before the Secretariat had informed the Committee of the rule stipulating that a legal opinion could only be sought by the Committee as a whole.

104. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) said that there was no procedural rule as such. According to long-standing practice at the United Nations, legal opinions were issued by the Legal Counsel only at the request of an intergovernmental body and not at the request of an individual Member State or group of Member States.

105. **The Chair** said that, owing to time constraints, the vote would be postponed until the afternoon meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/73/SR.10

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Seventy-third session

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Summary record of the 10th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 8 October 2018, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Saikal ..... (Afghanistan)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Organization of work

1. **The Chair** informed the Committee that, at the previous meeting, a vote had been requested on the proposal put forward by the delegation of Burundi to seek a legal opinion regarding the legal basis for the inclusion of the Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi in the Committee's list of special procedure mandate holders authorized to report to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session; and the legal basis for the Commission's dialogue with the Committee in view of paragraph 22 of Human Rights Council resolution 39/14 of 28 September 2018.

2. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi), speaking on a point of order, requested that the proceedings be suspended to allow for further consultations.

3. *The meeting was suspended at 3.10 p.m. and resumed at 3.20 p.m.*

4. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi), speaking on a point of order, clarified that he had not requested the suspension of the meeting but rather the adjournment of the debate under rule 116 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

5. **The Chair** said that, in accordance with rule 116, a recorded vote would be taken on the motion proposed by the representative of Burundi to adjourn the debate on the proposal of Burundi to seek a legal opinion.

6. **Ms. Mountchou** (Morocco) and **Mr. Aldahhak** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that their delegations supported the motion proposed by Burundi.

7. **Mr. Mahidi** (Austria) and **Ms. Korac** (United States of America), speaking on a point of order, asked what an adjournment in accordance with rule 116 would entail and when the Committee would return to the question.

8. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) said that he had requested an adjournment in order to give his delegation time to consult its capital and other delegations, as well as to hold consultations with the delegation that had requested the recorded vote on the proposal of Burundi to request a legal opinion. His delegation would require 48 hours.

9. *A recorded vote was taken on the motion proposed by the representative of Burundi to adjourn, for 48 hours, the debate of the Committee on the proposal by Burundi to seek a legal opinion.*

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay.

Abstaining:

Bhutan, Fiji, Jamaica, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Thailand.

10. *The motion was adopted by 67 votes to 56, with 11 abstentions.*

11. **Mr. Oussein** (Comoros) and **Mr. Yusuf** (Somalia) said that their machines had not worked during the vote.

12. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) noted that delegations in arrears were not allowed to vote in the Committee.

Agenda item 29: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/73/38, A/73/263, A/73/266, A/73/285, A/73/294 and A/73/301)

13. **Ms. Bah-Chang** (Sierra Leone) said that the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other international agreements promoting the empowerment of women and compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women were prerequisites for sustainable development. Sierra Leone was currently working on its seventh periodic report on the implementation of the Convention, which it hoped to submit to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women before the end of 2018. Recognizing the need to invest in the development of women, Sierra Leone would continue to uphold the relevant protocols relating to the empowerment of women, including the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the Secretary-General's campaign "UNiTE to End Violence against Women".

14. The Government had enacted laws and developed policies to address violence against women and unequal power relations between men and women. It was currently considering a national strategy for the reduction of female genital mutilation and a national strategy would also soon be launched to address adolescent and child marriage. In addition, a secretariat on trafficking in persons had been established, and the Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2005 was being aligned with the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption and with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Free education of a high quality had been introduced in all government and government-assisted schools, which would benefit girls in particular.

15. Following the adoption by the Security Council of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) relating to women and peace and security, a national action plan had been developed to fully implement the provisions of those resolutions. The Government had guaranteed the protection of gender rights through the progressive adoption and implementation of laws relating to the prohibition and punishment of domestic and sexual violence. It had begun to hold consultations with stakeholders nationwide with a view to finalizing the policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women. When adopted, the policy would support the Government in adopting legislative measures for the establishment of a commission on gender affairs, intended to implement affirmative action to include a quota of a minimum of 30 per cent women in governance at all levels.

16. **Mr. Edrees** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group commended the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity and his commitment to zero tolerance of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in the United Nations system. It reaffirmed its support for the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. As a stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal and a cross-cutting issue in all other Goals, gender equality and the empowerment of women required appropriate funding, implementation and follow-up at all levels.

17. Inequalities remained in labour force participation and leadership, income, pensions and working conditions. Women still lacked access to justice, basic health care, education, social protection and other services that supported their ability to generate income, particularly in rural areas. Violence and discrimination continued against women and girls, particularly in countries affected by armed conflict, under colonial rule or foreign occupation, or against which unilateral coercive measures had been applied. Climate change and natural disasters, which posed a challenge to the achievement of sustainable development, disproportionately affected women and girls. Women should participate in decision-making processes at all levels in order to contribute their knowledge and expertise to disaster risk reduction and to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

18. An important factor for the advancement of women was an environment that maintained world peace and promoted and protected human rights, democracy and the peaceful settlement of disputes. The political participation of women and their role in promoting peace and security should be strengthened. Men and boys should be engaged in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

19. In collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General, the Group had convened, at Headquarters, a high-level interactive dialogue on the subject "Innovative practices for the financial inclusion and economic empowerment of women, especially rural women: lessons from the South", on 13 March 2018, and an interactive discussion on the theme "Women's economic

empowerment and financial inclusion", on 27 and 28 June 2018.

20. Measures were needed to prevent, address and eliminate all forms of gender-based violence, especially femicide, and to ensure that women belonging to vulnerable groups were not subject to multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination. The Group was committed to promoting the right of women and girls to education at all levels, eliminating gender disparities in access to secondary and tertiary education and ensuring the access of women and girls to career development, training, scholarships and fellowships. Positive action should be taken to build the leadership skills of women and girls, guarantee their safety in the school environment and support women and girls with disabilities at all levels of education.

21. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all development efforts was critical for achieving sustainable development, combating hunger and malnutrition, poverty and disease, and ensuring the full participation of women in political, economic, social and cultural life. Adequate resources must be allocated for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in the workplace. The Group looked forward to increasing international cooperation and global partnership for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, including the fulfilment of commitments on official development assistance, debt relief, market access, financial and technical support and capacity-building, and access to science and technology for women and girls.

22. **Mr. Aldahhak** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that only a few days previously, members of the terrorist group Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) had brutally killed 25-year-old Tharawat al-Fadil Abu Umar, one of the civilian women abducted by that group during its assault on Suwayda' Governorate in July 2018. That outrageous act was just the latest in a long list of brutal crimes against women in Syria that would not have been possible without the support provided to extremist groups by the corrupt Governments of certain well-known States that continued to use their ill-gotten petrodollar wealth to sow chaos and destruction throughout the region.

23. Over the previous seven years Syrian women had borne the brunt of the most heinous forms of terrorism, supported by States wishing to promote extremist ideologies that treated women only as objects or sex slaves. Syrian women had also suffered from the bitter loss of loved ones killed in the terrorist war being waged against their homeland, while other women endured abysmal conditions in refugee camps in neighbouring countries, where they were often forced into early marriages, trafficked by criminal gangs or forced into prostitution in order to survive. One neighbouring State, in particular, was exploiting the suffering of refugees, including refugee women and children, in order to blackmail the European Union into granting it membership as well as visa-free access for its citizens. Meanwhile, other women continued to suffer under Israeli occupation, as a result of the crimes of the illegitimate international coalition or from unilateral coercive measures imposed by certain States.

24. Despite the horrors they had experienced, Syrian women continued to play a key role in the recovery of Syria, including as ministers and ambassadors abroad. The Vice-President of Syria was also a woman. Syrian women were also active in the Syrian Red Crescent, the Syria Trust for Development and the more than 1,400 licensed non-governmental organizations operating nationwide.

25. Syria was working with its international partners, relevant United Nations agencies and other stakeholders, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations from abroad, to empower and enhance the status of women. Syrian women received free health-care services while their children received free compulsory education. Syria would continue to combat the extremist groups that had abused, tortured and murdered so many women and girls, and would not allow them to undo the progress achieved by Syrian women over so many decades.

26. **Ms. Bushaqer** (Bahrain) said that said that her Government was striving to ensure that both men and women played an equitable role in national efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2001, Bahrain had established the Supreme Council for Women, which had been entrusted with formulating and putting in place national plans and policies for improving the situation of women and ensuring that their rights were fully upheld. The Council had recently elaborated a national framework to promote gender equality and address women's needs in plans and policies. The framework provided for the establishment of a national observatory on gender balance indicators and the drafting of national reports assessing the effectiveness of the country's policies and initiatives on gender equality and women's empowerment.

27. In 2017, Bahrain had adopted a new family law, with a view to strengthening legal protections for Bahraini families and enhancing family cohesion. Bahrain had also established family courts, a specialized office of the public prosecutor to address family

disputes, offices to promote reconciliation among family members, an alimony fund, and family protection units in the country's police directorates.

28. Women comprised a high proportion of the country's workforce and 28 per cent of its business owners — a far higher proportion than in other countries in the Middle East region. In 2017, UN-Women and the Supreme Council for Women had launched the Princess Sabika Bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa Global Award to highlight efforts to provide equal opportunities for men and women worldwide. UN-Women had, moreover, established a programme office in Bahrain in 2017, which would support the country's empowerment efforts and further entrench the status of Bahrain as an internationally-renowned centre for women's empowerment.

29. **Ms. Bassene** (Senegal) said that her Government was implementing programmes, in line with the national strategy for gender equity and equality, to support the empowerment of women and girls, who constituted more than half the population of Senegal. For example, the gender units of 11 ministries had been allocated budgetary resources on account of their potential to drive major change, a commission on entrepreneurship had been created to promote the empowerment of women and a scholarship programme, established with the support of the Economic Community of West African States, rewarded excellence in the scientific, professional and technical fields for girls from disadvantaged families.

30. Senegal had adopted a law prohibiting and criminalizing female genital mutilation and had developed a national plan of action to accelerate the abandonment of cutting. With a view to mitigating the risks and consequences of obstetric fistula, which mainly affected women who were poor, illiterate or living in remote areas, the Government had made treatment for obstetric fistula and caesarean sections free of charge. Since 2007, her delegation had presented, on behalf of the African Group, the draft resolution on supporting efforts to end obstetric fistula, which had always been adopted by consensus. The draft resolution to be presented at the current session would highlight the progress made and the difficulties faced in combating that scourge.

31. With a view to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, Senegal had established regional committees and a national technical committee for tackling gender-based violence. To improve procedures for the collection, monitoring and analysis of relevant data within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, the Government had established an annual review of the inclusion of the gender dimension in public policies.

32. **Ms. Fofana** (Burkina Faso) said that, since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, her Government had firmly committed itself to the new development architecture through the adoption of a national plan for social and economic development covering the period 2016–2020, which advocated the synergy of the roles of men and women in the development process and in the family through the elimination of existing inequalities. The sectoral policies and strategies established by the Government contributed to protecting and promoting the rights of women, advancing their empowerment and increasing their participation in the development process and decision-making.

33. In the light of the persistent gender gap in access to wage employment, the increased difficulties faced by women in finding a job or becoming self-employed and the limited access of women to land, every State should take measures to eliminate gender inequality in order to enable women to achieve economic empowerment through equal access to work, land and the means to support self-employment. In that regard, important national mechanisms in place included: a fund to support income-generating activities for women; a programme aimed at enabling the effective contribution of women to national wealth and ensuring their development; a law against female genital mutilation; a programme for reducing unemployment and underemployment among young people and women; and a multisectoral action plan for the implementation of the road map of the African Union on the demographic dividend.

34. Given that the elimination of gender inequality was a requirement for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and sustainable economic growth, the international community should adopt long-term measures to intensify efforts to improve the situation of women.

35. **Ms. Sorto Rosales** (El Salvador) said that significant legislative progress had recently been made in her country with the adoption of a law on equality, equity and the eradication of discrimination against women and a special comprehensive law on a life free from violence for women. In addition, a national policy on women's access to a life free from violence had been drafted, which represented a long-term strategic and political framework and included measures such as the detection, prevention and punishment of violence against women in all its manifestations.

36. Gender equality and the empowerment of women were fundamental to the achievement of development,

governance and peace and security. In July 2017, the Government had launched its first national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which reflected an increased commitment to women's rights, in particular in the areas of peacebuilding and security. El Salvador was also one of five countries in the region that was piloting the Spotlight Initiative, which aimed to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. In parallel, a strategy to prevent femicide and sexual violence had been launched, a national alert system on the status of violence against women had been established and communication campaigns had been launched to improve the response to and reporting of such violence.

37. In the light of its firm commitment to meet the needs of groups of women that suffered from multiple forms of discrimination and violence, including older women, indigenous women, women with disabilities and migrant women, the Government had adopted a national equality plan that focused on areas such as economic autonomy, care and social protection, and on mainstreaming the principle of equality and non-discrimination. Adolescents' right to comprehensive, timely and good-quality health care, with an emphasis on sexual and reproductive health were also being promoted. Although significant progress had been made in overcoming discrimination, States would need to continue to coordinate with all relevant organizations to fulfil the commitments made.

38. **Ms. Chidiac** (Lebanon) said that her country had a long history of contributions to the promotion of the rights of women and girls, and her delegation was proud of the fact that a female Lebanese expert, Ms. Nahla Haydar, had been serving on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women since 2013. Over the previous year, movements had taken shape to raise awareness of, and denounce, violence and sexual harassment committed against women, opening a sincere and dynamic debate in societies around the world. In that context, her Government had recognized its responsibility to protect and promote women and girls. The Council of Ministers had approved a draft law on sexual harassment in the workplace, which would soon be the subject of a vote in the Parliament. Lebanon had also repealed a law allowing an alleged rapist to escape criminal prosecution by marrying his victim.

39. Her delegation noted the efforts of Lebanese civil society, by way of local and international non-governmental organizations, to raise awareness of early and forced marriage. Civil society and human rights defenders must be allowed to carry out their work without hindrance or fear of reprisals and in full respect of freedom, democracy and the rule of law, and should be acknowledged as credible partners in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed development goals. Her Government was committed to the promotion of gender equality, the empowerment of women, education for all, sexual and reproductive health, and the fight against discrimination and all forms of violence. To that end, it was necessary to reduce legal gaps concerning the protection of women and to expand efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in public and private life.

40. Regrettably, discrimination and violence against women and girls continued in many regions of the world. They were often the first victims of historical and structural inequalities that severely affected their fundamental rights and freedoms. Her Government was aware of the challenges posed by the presence of a great number of displaced Syrian refugees on its territory, some of whom were the victims of sexual violence, harassment and early and forced marriage. Equality for women was the mark of true civilization, and it was high time for women and girls to be afforded the full enjoyment of their rights.

41. **Ms. León Murillo** (Costa Rica) said that much remained to be done if Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality was to be achieved, as illustrated by the fact that only 18 of the 196 delegations that had spoken during the general debate of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly had been represented by women.

42. Gender equality should be a goal for countries committed to inclusive, democratic and sustainable coexistence. For its part, the Government of Costa Rica had achieved gender parity in its Cabinet for the first time in its history in 2018, its national gender equality and equity policy had been implemented 10 years prior and its new national policy in that area was a multidimensional instrument comprising four key elements: cultural change, and the distribution of time, wealth and power. Women's economic empowerment was also a top priority, given its indisputable impact on other forms of autonomy. Accordingly, road maps and strategies had been designed to safeguard women's physical and sexual autonomy, since autonomous and independent women were better able to break cycles of poverty, discrimination and violence. A national policy had also been put in place to respond to, prevent and provide protection from gender-based violence and the Executive branch had stated in August 2018 that preventing and addressing violence against women was a national priority.

43. She commended the work of the Secretary-General and United Nations agencies to eradicate sexual exploitation and harassment within the Organization and said that the perpetrators must be severely punished. The Organization should lead by example as a place free from harassment and discrimination where decisive progress was made towards achieving the goals set by the international community on the situation of women.

44. **Mr. Oussein** (Comoros) said that the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 of the African Union both underscored that sustainable development would be impossible as long as half of humanity was denied its human rights. In order to reduce inequality and eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, they must not only have equal access to quality education, economic resources, jobs and leadership positions but also equal opportunities to participate in political life.

45. His Government was committed to the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and, 23 years after their adoption, conditions for women and girls in the Comoros had improved substantially in such areas as education and health. The strategy for economic growth and poverty reduction prioritized equitable growth and the empowerment of women. As a result, the number of women serving in high positions in national institutions, including at the ministry level, had increased nearly threefold over the previous decade.

46. In combating inequalities, extreme poverty, unemployment and violence, the Government was facilitating access to microcredit and had set aside funds at a national banking institution for use by women and children. Women occupied an important place in Comorian society, and his Government would spare no effort in countering social disparities, violence against women and girls, illiteracy, famine and poverty.

47. **Mr. Yaremenko** (Ukraine) said that, in recognition of its commitment to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, the Government had approved a State social programme for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women for the period up to 2021 and had established the position of Government Commissioner on Gender Equality Policy to strengthen the coordination and monitoring of government commitments to gender equality.

48. During its recent term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Ukraine had successfully carried out its national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in order to increase women's participation in decision-making in the areas of national security, defense and peacemaking, ensure the protection of women and girls and prevent and respond to gender-based violence. Gender-responsive budgeting had also been included in the national strategy for the development of public funds management.

49. The elevation of the status of the UN-Women Office in Ukraine to the level of Country Office earlier in the year was an important step towards a broader and deeper partnership with that entity, and would strengthen national mechanisms to protect equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

50. Foreign aggression against Ukraine had brought fear and insecurity to the majority of women and girls in occupied territories of Ukraine, including Crimea and Donbas, and the Government was enhancing its efforts for their protection and empowerment in all spheres of life. A national action plan had been adopted in connection with the recommendations set out in the concluding observations of the eighth periodic report of Ukraine on its implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had recently become the first State institution to join the awareness-raising solidarity movement HeForShe in Ukraine, and it was clear that sustainable development would be impossible without the full enjoyment of equal rights by women and girls, men and boys.

51. **Ms. Pobee** (Ghana) said that the advancement of women was not only a matter of respect for the human rights of all persons but also a vital tool for achieving sustainable development, peace and security. Structural and institutional gender inequality was a root cause of violence against women. Despite the comprehensive framework provided by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda, the achievement of their goals and targets concerning women and girls remained elusive; the underrepresentation of women in public decision-making roles was an indication of an unfinished agenda. Accordingly, her delegation commended the exceptional work of the African Women Leaders Network and its partners. Her Government had also facilitated consultations regarding a revised gender equality bill and had strengthened efforts to assist women financially by way of the Microfinance and Small Loans Centre.

52. Concerted action was needed at the national and international levels to address sexual harassment, which was one part of a continuum of gender-based violence. Its negative effects on women's economic and political roles in society could no longer be ignored. The enactment of laws to provide protection to them was an

important first step. While Ghana had adopted relevant national laws, much more work was required.

53. In addressing gender-based violence, the Government had also introduced a national campaign on ending child, early and forced marriages, a 10-year framework and renewable operational plan to end child marriages, and legislation such as an amendment to the Intestate Succession Law and the introduction of a bill concerning the property rights of spouses.

54. The Secretariat and Member States must continue to devote resources to addressing issues of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

55. **Ms. Matar** (United Arab Emirates) said that the year 2020 would mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Programme for Action, a significant milestone that should encourage the international community to redouble its efforts to achieve gender equality and promote the empowerment of women. The Constitution of the United Arab Emirates provided that male and female citizens were equal in terms of their rights and duties, and her Government believed that the empowerment of women and gender equality were essential prerequisites for building just and tolerant societies. To achieve that objective, her Government had strengthened its legislation on wage equality for men and women and had adopted laws to strengthen respect for women's rights. It was also striving to increase the number of women in leadership and decision-making positions. Women currently held approximately one third of the positions in the Council of Ministers.

56. Much of the progress made by women in the United Arab Emirates had been achieved because of the support and vision of Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Supreme Chairperson of the Family Development Foundation, President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood and President of the General Women's Union. Those three bodies had formulated national strategies and policies for empowering women so that they could play a key role in the development of the country, in line with the national development plan, UAE Vision 2021, and international benchmarks. The Gender Balance Council was also endeavouring to promote equality between women and men, which could have a significant positive impact on the economy and on efforts to promote peace and security.

57. The United Arab Emirates fully supported the women, peace and security agenda and had made women's empowerment a foreign policy priority. It was also a strong supporter of the Every Woman, Every Child initiative to reduce maternal and infant mortality. Her country hosted the UN-Women Gulf Liaison Office and would continue to provide support to UN-Women, which had recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Defence and the General Women's Union for the provision of specialized training to female military officers that would prepare them for United Nations peacekeeping missions in the Middle East region.

58. **Ms. Rosa Suazo** (Honduras) said that States should capitalize on the growing international attention being devoted to the need to eradicate violence against women and intensify their efforts to improve the lives of women and girls by implementing holistic and multidimensional programmes that not only combated violence against women but also provided access to education, credit, health care and food security. Notably, Honduras was one of the countries in the region in the Spotlight Initiative.

59. Greater awareness of the links between gender-based violence and non-State actors such as gangs would strengthen the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the investigations carried out by national and international human rights bodies. Violence against women took different forms around the world and those specificities must be recognized in order to develop appropriate and complete solutions.

60. Honduras was implementing various programmes to support women's development, education, health and active participation in society, most notably the "Ciudad Mujer" programme, which was an inter-agency effort involving 16 government entities. Given that 44 per cent of women and girls in Honduras lived in rural areas and women's economic autonomy was fundamental to combating all forms of gender-based violence, a financial programme designed to meet the needs of rural women, "CrediMujer", had been set up in 2015.

61. **Ms. Hillebrandt** (Bahamas) said that her Government had paid special attention to the issues of trafficking in persons, violence against women, and the economic empowerment of women. The Department of Gender and Family Affairs, the national mechanism mandated to promote the advancement and empowerment of women, had undertaken or proposed several initiatives, including a five-year strategic plan to improve the quality of life in the Bahamas; a national strategic plan for ending gender-based violence; regular meetings with non-governmental organizations and interested persons to share information about issues affecting women and men; review of a national gender equality policy for submission to the Cabinet; and participation in the Inter-Ministry Committee on Trafficking in Persons.

62. The Bahamas had built partnerships with national, regional and international agencies which assisted in reviewing concerns about the advancement of women nationwide. There had been consistent collaboration with UN-Women, the Pan American Development Foundation and the Pan American Health Organization.

63. Her Government also extended a standing invitation to all thematic special procedure mandate holders of the United Nations, and fully supported the purpose and process of national reporting. Although the Bahamas was a small island developing State and had limited capacities, it would present its sixth periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women later in the current month. The Bahamas was committed to the protection of all human rights and to the advancement and empowerment of women and girls.

64. **Ms. Vieira** (Cabo Verde) said that her Government was committed to formulating policies to address barriers to the advancement of women and girls. Women's rights were human rights and the inclusion and promotion of women contributed to the development of resilient and sustainable societies. Gender parity and equal opportunities were enshrined in the Constitution and had guided the Government in the national implementation of international conventions on women's rights.

65. Several national plans and policies had been adopted in the areas of gender parity in education, universal access to education, gender equality, combating gender-based violence and assisting victims, and trafficking in persons. New policies to strengthen capacities and legal frameworks to improve family planning, reproductive health-care services and reproductive rights had also been set out in accordance with the commitments of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Furthermore, political participation and leadership were being improved to ensure broader representation of women in decision-making positions.

66. Major challenges lay ahead, particularly with regard to the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against women and girls. Comprehensive policies and resources were therefore needed, and financial inclusion must be improved for vulnerable women who did not have economic resources and assets. The feminization of poverty must also be tackled. In overcoming such challenges, a new window of opportunity for the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women would be opened.

67. **Ms. Ben Ategh** (Libya) said that there was no doubt that women could play a pivotal role in sustainable development initiatives. However, the difficult political and security situation was preventing many Libyan women from realizing their rights and participating fully in the national recovery. Nevertheless, Libya would continue to strive to achieve the political, economic and social empowerment of women and their engagement in all development plans and projects. To that end, the Presidential Council had established women's empowerment offices in a number of ministries and State institutions with a view to facilitating women's political participation, and women had also participated in drafting the new Constitution, which provided for gender equality, non-discrimination and the equitable participation of women in leadership positions.

68. The Government had issued a decree on the provision of assistance to women and girls who had been subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence during the political unrest that had occurred in 2011. The Ministry of Justice had also issued a decree providing for the establishment of a special fund for victims of sexual violence and legal and social assistance to those victims.

69. Her Government strongly condemned all forms of trafficking in persons, especially trafficking in women and girls. National laws on human trafficking had therefore been aligned with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Convention against Corruption and close cooperation had been undertaken with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Children's Fund, UN-Women and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in order to enhance criminal justice and law enforcement mechanisms and promote security, especially in the south of the country.

70. **Mr. Locsin, Jr.** (Philippines), recounting several historical examples of pillage and rape during wartime and the ways such crimes had been prevented or punished, said that although war often provided a psychological backdrop for misogyny, men were not slaves to their basic desires and could respond to discipline. Trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation existed in all societies regardless of whether economic times were good or bad. While the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals could help to combat sex trafficking, simply eradicating poverty would not solve the problem of trafficking. Similarly, education had a role to play, but it was useless in dire situations, such as the choice to go with abductors or stay behind and die, or to remain in captivity or be tortured.

71. Only women qualified in police and law enforcement work held the power to solve the problem of trafficking in women and girls. During his time as Mayor of the city of Davao, President Duterte had turned the case work on sex-related crimes and their victims over to women police officers. Cases had then moved faster and the chances of re-victimization had decreased. Women provided a unique perspective: they offered the comfort that victims needed as well as the rage that drove the wheels of justice to turn.

72. It was important to track down and prosecute the traffickers and their clients by any means necessary, bearing in mind human rights law and international law. The perpetrators should be confined to small cages, similar to the way they had treated their victims, and be restricted from causing any further harm to society.

73. His delegation was facilitating the work on a draft resolution on combating trafficking in women and girls and looked forward to constructive engagement on that matter.

74. **Mr. Mohd Nasir** (Malaysia) said that his country had made notable progress on gender equality and women's empowerment, including through the 1989 National Policy on Women and the Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women 2010–2015. Several measures had been taken to encourage women to return to the workforce, such as career programmes, grants for childcare centres at the workplace, increased maternity leave and flexible work arrangements. The Government had also ratified several international agreements, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Cairo Programme of Action and the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action, demonstrating a commitment to ensuring the protection of the rights of women and girls.

75. Quantifiable success had been achieved in terms of women's participation in the national labour force and their holding of senior management positions in the public service and on the board of directors of listed companies, among other areas. The first female Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia had been elected in May 2018, and a Malaysian woman had been appointed as Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

76. Malaysia would continue to champion the cause of women's advancement, both within the scope of its national development priorities and in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

77. **Mr. Ligoya** (Malawi) said that gender equality and women's empowerment were priority areas of the national development agenda, and that, with the support of the President of Malawi, who was also a HeForShe IMPACT Champion, the Government had been implementing initiatives to promote the socioeconomic development of women and girls. Those included a programme to readmit young women to school, an amendment to the Constitution to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years, the construction of girls' hostels and sanitary facilities, and a national strategy to end child marriage. With gender mainstreaming policies in place, the intake of female students in tertiary education institutions had increased from 5 percent in 2000 to 48 per cent in 2016. The Government understood that investing in girls' education would afford them better economic opportunities and help in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. With regard to agriculture and food production, the Government had amended the Land Act of 2016 to give women the right to own land with a secured tenure and was promoting initiatives to provide poor women with savings and loan services.

78. While the number of women holding decision-making positions in the civil service had risen significantly, women were still underrepresented in Malawi. Therefore, in addition to implementing laws and policies on gender, the Government was taking measures to further increase the number of women serving in parliament and local governments.

79. **Ms. Prizreni** (Albania) said that a quota system and outreach efforts had increased women's representation in parliament to 28 per cent, following the national elections held in June 2017. In addition, her Government was currently composed of 50 per cent women, many of whom held very important portfolios such as defence and justice. With regard to gender mainstreaming, 25 budget programmes relating to 10 line ministries for 2019–2021 contained gender-responsive financial markers and related key performance indicators.

80. At the local level, the National Network of Women Councillors had been established to bring all alliances of women councillors under a common women's agenda. The female participation rate at the municipal council level was between 35 and 40 per cent, and the aim was to increase it to 50 per cent in the local elections of 2019. Women represented 15 per cent of mayors countrywide. The three largest municipalities in Albania had in place a local gender action plan for the implementation of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life.

81. Her Government had taken steps to strengthen its legislative and institutional framework on gender equality and non-discrimination and to improve the

monitoring and accountability of public offices in relation to women and gender-based violence. For a more efficient legal framework to combat gender-based violence, no amnesty would be granted for the perpetrators of gender-based violence. Furthermore, with the assistance of UN-Women, a teacher training programme was being implemented nationwide to address gender-based violence in the light of the new national responsibilities assigned to educational institutions following recent changes to the law on measures against violence in family relationships.

82. Albania had just adopted its first national action plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), inspired by the words recently expressed by the Chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee: "A more peaceful world can only be achieved if women and their fundamental rights and security are recognized and protected in war".

83. **Ms. Vives Balmaña** (Andorra) said that education was a human right, yet women accounted for 61 per cent of all illiterate persons worldwide. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals would depend in large measure on the way that girls and women were educated. It was vital to eliminate stereotypes through education, address violence against women and eradicate discrimination against them in legislative frameworks. Education in Andorra was diverse and free of gender stereotypes.

84. As part of the national efforts undertaken to promote gender equality, a dedicated team had been established to support women subjected to gender-based violence and take follow-up action. In addition, through a two-year inclusive and participatory process, situations of discrimination had been identified, over half of which affected women in Andorra. On the basis of the results of that process, a draft law had been presented on equality of treatment and non-discrimination, which aimed to strengthen the principle of gender mainstreaming and compensatory equality between men and women. Concrete measures for implementation of the draft law had also been developed, such as the creation of an equality observatory.

85. Andorra wished to contribute to cooperation programmes that focused on integrating women through education and training. Progress towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda had been slow to date, but education, the realization of human rights, the inclusion of a gender perspective, and the prevention of discrimination and abuse against women would all play an important role.

86. **Mr. Komara** (Guinea) said that experience had shown that societies that gave women an important role made significant progress towards economic, social and political development. It was therefore regrettable that women continued to be the main victims of poverty, climate change, recurrent forms of violence and discrimination. Women had featured prominently in Guinean history, and Guinea had been one of the first countries to ratify international legal instruments on the promotion and empowerment of women. In dedicating his second mandate to the women and girls of Guinea, the President had confirmed that sustainable development could not be achieved without women's participation. Although there were few women in the Government, they occupied key financial and administrative positions.

87. Education, access to financial resources and physical well-being were essential to promoting and empowering women. The Government had built and equipped empowerment centres in the chief towns of the country, constructed over 4,000 classrooms in rural areas and awarded merit scholarships to young girls. Mutual funds for women had been set up in the five communes of Conakry and in 27 prefectures of Guinea, and microfinance institutions were fostering women's entrepreneurship.

88. In the area of health care, the authorities had implemented an updated national strategy with provisions on reducing maternal, neonatal and infant/child mortality, treating women with obstetric fistula, and caring for the victims of gender-based violence. However, numerous challenges remained, including countering the influence of traditions and beliefs, providing greater access to technology and establishing a climate of peace.

89. **Ms. Mohammed** (Ethiopia) said that her Government had made women's empowerment a priority. Indeed, the development of women and children was one of the pillars of its Growth and Transformation Plan II, which had been designed to ensure women's ownership of land and their access to credit and other fixed assets. Gender had been mainstreamed in other areas of the Plan and her Government was working to ensure gender equality in education and employment, enhance access to reproductive health and rights, eliminate violence against women and children and increase women's participation at the highest level of political decision-making.

90. A strategic plan for an integrated and multi-sectoral response to violence against women and child justice had been implemented, which focused on prevention, protection and response mechanisms. In addition, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs

had included indicators on violence reduction in its plan for 2016–2020.

91. Her Government had made renewed commitments at the Girl Summit of 2014 to end female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage by 2025. As a result of a legal and policy framework and the mobilization of a high level of political support, the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting had decreased from 56 per cent to 23 per cent and the rate of child marriage from 21 per cent to 8 per cent in 2016. Action had also been taken to eradicate obstetric fistula by raising awareness of the need to prevent early marriage and expanding medical treatment centres to the nine regional states.

92. Trafficking in persons was prohibited by the Constitution and by the revised Criminal Code. Ethiopia had also adopted a proclamation for the prevention and suppression of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants and the federal police had established a human trafficking and narcotics section to investigate those crimes.

93. While the achievements made in fulfilling the advancement of women were to be celebrated, there remained vast gaps and tremendous challenges, including deep-rooted social norms and attitudes and a lack of disaggregated data, resources and capacity.

94. **Ms. Phromlert** (Thailand) said that, as the advancement of women and gender equality lay at the heart of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, commitments for the empowerment of women at the national, regional and international levels must be implemented more comprehensively and systematically.

95. Efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women in Thailand had been made by the Government, by other stakeholders such as the private sector, civil society and youth, and by an increasing number of men, including through the HeForShe campaign. The fourth draft of the national human rights plan for the period 2019–2023 would address a wide range of issues and would also be extended to cover the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.

96. The Government had intensified its efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, and in particular to respond to those who faced multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and those in complex situations, such as women prisoners. In that context, her delegation was proud to note that the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders, also known as the Bangkok Rules, had been implemented worldwide.

97. Economic empowerment was an indispensable component of sustainable development and gender must not impede access to business opportunities. Women entrepreneurs represented 47 per cent of the business population of Thailand and the Government would continue to facilitate access to finance and start-up technology for prospective women entrepreneurs nationwide.

98. National measures and guidelines had been adopted on women and peace and security, which encompassed the role of women as agents of change in addressing political and social conflicts domestically and internationally. Thai female military and police personnel were now serving in three United Nations peacekeeping operations overseas and female personnel accounted for 24 per cent of all Thai peacekeeping officers globally.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

99. **Mr. Furumoto** (Japan), responding to the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the Committee's ninth meeting, said that the allegations made were factually incorrect and groundless. For over 70 years, Japan had consistently respected democracy and human rights and had contributed to the peace and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region and the international community as a whole. Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should bring true peace to North-East Asia by overcoming mutual mistrust and deepening their cooperation with one other. Japan wished to share that approach and called on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to aim for a bright future together. Should that country continue to raise the same issues, his delegation would not use the right of reply to repeat its position, but that did not mean it agreed with the position of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

100. **Mr. Lee** Jooil (Republic of Korea), responding to the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the Committee's ninth meeting, said that the 12 North Korean workers referred to had defected to the Republic of Korea of their own free will and enjoyed full freedom as fellow Koreans. The relevant authority of the Republic of Korea was reviewing the recent allegations. His Government hoped that free movement between the two Koreas would be possible sooner rather than later, thus overcoming the constraints of a divided Korean Peninsula and relieving the pain endured by separated families. His Government would not spare any efforts to

resolve the humanitarian issues through a faithful implementation of the Panmunjom Declaration on Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula and the Pyongyang Joint Declaration of September 2018.

101. **Mr. Ri** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the heinous crimes committed by Japan during the Second World War had not been officially recognized or duly compensated. Without recognition or compensation, there cou'd be no bright future for Japan and no improvement in relations between the two countries. Japan had tried to evade its past crimes and had also tried to avoid officially recognizing, apologizing or providing compensation for them. No statute of limitations applied to such crimes against humanity.

102. Regarding the 12 women abducted from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including Ms. Kim Ryon Hui, the facts were all coming to light as the days went by. The women's families were anxiously waiting for their return and all the women wanted to return home to their parents. The Panmunjom Declaration and the Pyongyang Joint Declaration called for an end to the decades-long division and confrontation between North and South Korea and for the countries to proceed towards national reconciliation and unity, peace and prosperity and reunification.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.